Unspeakable things unspoken.
Otherness and victimisation in Judges 19-21:
An Irigarayan reading.

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Declaration

"The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or another HEI except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit."

Abstract

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The story of the raped and murdered woman of Judges 19, and the civil war and mass marriage that ensue in chapters 20-21, are hardly favourite tales of the Hebrew Bible. The chapters have often been dismissed as little more than an anachronistic epilogue, a collage of earlier stories badly drawn together. More recently, feminist critics have reclaimed the episode as a 'text of terror', proof of patriarchal oppression, and a story to read *in memoriam*. This thesis will argue that, far from being a clumsy collage, Judges 19-21 is actually a carefully narrated tale that chronicles the descent of a nation into extreme individualism and fragmentation. In dialogue with continental philosopher Luce Irigaray, it will bring out underlying dynamics of identity formation and how differential constructions of identity of the One and the Other yield patterns of victimisation and justification of violence. This study will argue that the narrator pays close attention to issues of gender, and highlights the plight of the women of Israel and the dehumanising nature of a nation where everyone did 'what was right in their own eyes'. An Irigarayan reading will bring out silences and missed possibilities for the subjectivity of women, whilst also shedding light on the victimisation of men within the logic of totalitarian identity constructions. Careful attention to the text reveals the dynamics of the characterisation of Yahweh, a rich tapestry of allusions to other canonical texts and the silencing of God by his human partners. The end of Judges therefore offers a theological conclusion to the book as a whole, set in the wider context of Scripture, and opens up avenues for thought on theological anthropology, understandings of identity and gender, and a theological commentary on violence. As such, Judges 19-21 is a text that offers more possibilities than a simple reading *in memoriam*: it is a theological resource for understanding the dynamics of gender violence and exclusion.

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Abbreviations

All abbreviations are those of the *SBL Manual of Style*.

Introduction

It is June 2001, in a small church in deepest Arkansas. 'Brother John' is speaking at a youth service. The text he has chosen: Judges 19. 'This is the story of a woman who left her husband. She disrespected authority and leaders. She got what she deserved. This is what will happen to you if you disobey your leaders.'

This is by far the worst sermon I have ever heard, and it started my journey with Judges 19-21. It is the only time I have ever heard this text referred to in public worship. There was nothing in my Christian journey until then that could have given me the skills to deal with that text, or that sermon. At the same time, it is a text that burrowed its way into my consciousness, because I have consistently worked with women (and men) who have experienced sexual abuse over the years. How can they read this text? Why is it there? In what sense can it be Scripture? While the text has been used oppressively, can it be read differently, and redeemed from oppressive interpretations? Has it got anything to offer, beyond a reading *in memoriam*?

Searching for hermeneutical keys proved a frustrating endeavour. The episode is often treated as an add-on, of much less interest than the political history of the rest of Judges. When attention is given to it, it is usually abstracted from the wider narrative in ways that undermine its setting within the book as whole, and the overall arc of the Hebrew Scriptures. I found dismissal of the episode as domestic, as exaggerated, as hopelessly patriarchal, as a redactional aberration, but comparatively little attention to the inner dynamics of the story and its relation to the world of present-day readers.[1] Yet the world of today is rife with news of abuse of individual and entire groups of women. The recent story of Yazidi women captured by ISIS powerfully echo the stories of abuse and forced marriage within a context of ethnic tensions that we find in Judges 19-21.

The intersection of gender and ethnicity in Judges 19-21, with its complex shifts between gender positions and between different configurations of national belonging, caught my attention, and prompted wider questions about otherness and identity within the story. I looked for a way into the text that would enable me to retrieve the stories of its women, without occluding the men of the story; a way that would enable an exploration of human

[1] The history of interpretation will be explored in 4.1.

relationships in action, and the way in which these relationships are configured in increasingly destructive ways.

This is when I settled upon Irigaray as a dialogue partner in approaching the text. Irigaray stands slightly apart from other postmodern philosophers in her work on sacred texts and insistence that texts and the reality of the author behind them matters. She therefore allows for a full exploration of both text and context. Her hermeneutic makes space for both suspicion and retrieval, and she insists on the importance of the connection of sacred texts with the transformation of present reality. Whilst she is a feminist, she insists on the importance of attending to both male and female subjectivity, and on the destructive nature of patriarchy for both genders. Hence she can help explore the dynamics of the text in ways that enable all perspectives to be heard, rather than simply reversing the polarity of androcentric discourses. In this respect, Irigaray, as a continental feminist, shapes a different reading from the more common Anglo-Saxon feminist readings of Judges such as Bal's (1988a), Brenner's (1997), Exum's (1993) or Yee's (1995). Irigaray's early work concentrates on the constitution of subjectivity, the formation of identity and the role of the Other[2] in forming concepts of the self. This opens the way to the consideration of gender within the wider framework of ethnicity that I was looking for. Little work has been done on otherness in Judges, and work done has not used a rigorous philosophical framework for understanding and analysing otherness (e.g. Baker, 2016; Cheng, 2002; Mortgensen, 2008; Müllner, 1999). Conducting an Irigarayan reading can therefore enable a rigorous analysis of the processes of identity formation, the attendant conceptualisation of the Other and the configuration of relationships that ensue. Such a reading will illuminate the dynamics at play in the victimisation of women and men in the text, and help assess how the text portrays sexual violence. This will in turn open up a reading appropriate for today, and of use to those who have experienced sexual violence and wonder how to approach Judges 19-21 as Scripture.

This study will unfold in three broad movements. The first two chapters will concentrate on Irigaray. First, an overview of her work will bring out the main themes of relevance to Judges, as well as her use of the three key disciplines of philosophy, psychoanalysis and linguistics. Chapter 2 will then explore how Irigaray has been used (and misused) in Biblical Studies, and define what an Irigarayan method will consist of. Chapter 3 will offer

[2] Irigaray uses at times a capital, at times inverted commas, at times italics and at times nothing to speak of the Other. For the sake of consistency, I will use the capitalised form when talking of the Other as a philosophical concept.

a translation of Judges 19-21 for the purpose of analysis, together with textual notes. Chapter 4 will then move into a detailed examination of Judges 19-21, starting with a consideration of the history of interpretation, followed by a full literary analysis of the text, bringing out key Irigarayan themes. Chapter 5 will bring out the dynamics of identity formation, otherness and victimisation, before I draw final conclusions on reading Judges 19-21 as a sacred text.

Chapter 1.

Encountering Irigaray

Speculum: De l'autre femme. Irigaray's often mistranslated, misunderstood title, encapsulates the depths and dilemmas of her philosophy. She is a difficult philosopher, wielding language in witty, unusual, poetic ways that make her writing hermetic and difficult. Her interest in gender and constructing feminine identity ('l'autre, femme'), has seen her associated with Cixous and Kristeva, the so-called Holy Trinity of French Feminism (Ives, 2013; Allwood, 1998; Joy, 2003), despite Irigaray's (2008b, p. 74) own reservations about the feminist enterprise. *Speculum* (mirrors and signs) points to her interest in semiotics and training as a linguist, while her concern for the Other situates her firmly within contemporary, postmodern philosophies of otherness, in dialogue with Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida and Lévinas (1997). Her interest in otherness is not merely philosophical but steeped in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Encountering Irigaray and bringing her to bear on the Book of Judges will involve careful listening to the different strands of her thought and its complex interweaving of disciplines, influences and dialogue partners.

This chapter will chart a course through Irigaray's work. After an initial overview, it will explore the three main methodological strands of her approach (philosophy, psychoanalysis and linguistics), before turning to thematic concerns of relevance to our study of Judges.

1.1. Irigaray's works: an overview

The publication of *Speculum* (1974) marked the beginning of Irigaray's main research interest: deconstructing phallocentrism in language and culture and mapping out a different way of being for both genders. Her work roughly divides into three periods. Initially, she concentrated on deconstructing Western philosophical models, a 'critique addressed to a monosubjective, monosexual, patriarchal and phallocratic philosophy and culture' (1994, p. 130). Having made a space for woman to emerge, she then attempted to map out female subjectivity and the conditions necessary for its sustainability. Finally, she addresses the very possibility of intersubjective, inter-gender relationships.

Irigaray's initial concern was to expose how the dominance of a universal single principle in Western culture has precluded the emergence of and dialogue with, a true Other. She tackled the main figures of classical philosophy, starting with Freud, as he embodies and

makes explicit the outcome of centuries of phallocentric culture. She then works her way back to Marx, Nietszche, Kant, Descartes, Socrates and Plato. Beyond *Speculum, Amante Marine* (1980) explores issues of religion, truth and appearance though dialogue with Nietszche; there we see the seeds of her dual approach, simultaneously seeking deconstruction and retrieval. *Passions Elémentaires* (1982) reprises many of the themes of *Speculum*, with a focus on language: its definition of reality, its role in identity construction and in relationships. *L'Oubli de L'Air* (1983) dialogues with Heidegger and reflects on mediations, liminality and the need for in-between spaces to distinguish between the One and the Other and make true communication possible.

Irigaray then shifts from deconstruction towards the emergence of a feminine subject. Linguistics become more prominent, together with social and political issues. She pays attention to the silences of past cultures, to hear forgotten voices. An early concern is the retrieval of female genealogies, the mother-daughter relationship and the necessity of women-to-women relationships to construct a female generic identity (1984; 1987a). Other work in that period focuses on linguistics and empirical study of the sexuation of language (1997; 1990b). *Parler n'est Jamais Neutre* (1985) has come to embody Irigaray's key linguistic principles: careful, precise speech analysis and a challenge to the idea of 'neutral/neuter' speech and of scientific methods as objective. This volume contains embryonic reflections on methodology: the importance of the situatedness of both text and reader, their history and context, and the need to understand texts and the person speaking behind them on their own terms. There she parts company with other postmodern philosophers and reader-focused approaches to literary criticism.

Je, Tu, Nous (1990a) marks the start of Irigaray's third period, a more constructive and speculative period. A quick look at titles in the last twenty years gives an indication of her main concerns: *J'aime à toi* (1992), *La democrazia comincia a due* (1994), *Etre deux* (1997), *Le partage de la parole* (2001), *The way of love* (2002), *Sharing the world* (2008b). Having brought out underlying philosophical, psychological and linguistic schemas, and made a contribution towards elaborating a distinct female subjectivity, she turns her attention to the possibility of true communication with the Other, across genders and, to a lesser degree, cultures and ethnicities, and the political conditions needed for change. Her recent books, *In the beginning, she was* (2013) and *To be born* (2017) gather the main threads of her many works with reflections on the methods and insights she has developed, making explicit and self-conscious difficult concepts and approaches from her early writings.

The first phase of her work is of most interest to this study, both thematically, in its emphasis on otherness and the constitution of subjectivity, and methodologically. She self-consciously applies deconstructive techniques to both philosophical and mythological texts, and combines psychoanalytic, philosophical and linguistic tools to her study. Her second and third phases are more constructive and speculative in nature, though her themes and methods still offer much scope for application.

1.2. A three-pronged approach

Irigaray draws equally on philosophy, psychoanalysis and linguistics. While the three interweave and feed off each other, it is possible to trace differences in emphasis in her approach to various themes. Her discussion of otherness and the 'logic of the same' is deeply philosophical despite the Lacanian influence, and a marker of her early period; her psychoanalytic roots are most evident in her discussion of the constitution of subjectivity, and how this must temper purely philosophical or ethical reflections, a growing interest from her middle period that tapers off into a more political stance; finally, her linguist's training shapes her analysis of texts and discourse. Separating those three threads is somewhat artificial, yet can enable us to grasp essential aspects and nuances of her arguments.

1.2.1. Philosophy: towards a theory of sexual/sexuate difference

1.2.1.1. The 'logic of the same'

Philosophy shapes Irigaray's content and method. She takes a reverse look at philosophy, patiently disentangling layers of successive reversals: Marx inverses Hegel, Nietszche inverses Platonism (1992, p. 107). She copies this reversal, but instead of reversing another's philosophy, she chooses to reverse herself, see herself not as 'I' but as the unacknowledged Other. This is typical of how she simultaneously uses her philosophical heritage and subverts it.

She considers a problem underlying virtually all philosophy: being human is a finite condition, a finitude inscribed in gender difference (1992, p. 65). No one human being can be, or know, the whole of reality. Yet philosophy has been built on the assumption of an absolute consciousness that can probe the whole of what it is to be human. In the process, sexual difference was erased and women subsumed into a totalitarian male consciousness (1977, p. 72). The result is a split from material reality, a representation of reality that fails to acknowledge its own limitations.

Irigaray (1974, p. 19) starts with Freud, as he uncovers the unconscious assumptions of previous thinkers. In Freud, all one learns about sexual differentiation is male: the sexuality described is male, the principle of origin is male, and male differentiation engenders the Other. Woman is what man is not: the one without a penis, who desires what she has not. The only Other is man's inverted *alter ego*, his negative. Woman is not truly Other but the 'Other of the Same', her place defined by where man needs her to be: denigrating her own sex and fuelling desire for the perfect, ultimate man (p. 44). Woman becomes a mirror for man to look at himself.

While Freud over-sexualises his theory, it nonetheless derives from solipsistic concepts of being, developed in classical philosophy, predicated on an all-seeing, all-being single subject. Here she challenges Descartes and his *cogito* aphorism. *Cogito* exemplifies this solitary consciousness divorced from material reality. Identity is reformulated through thinking: man flies from the precariousness of relations with Others, and the difficulty of constructing an image of the self that is inevitably contingent on a relationship with an Other who cannot be defined, contained or reduced to an inversion of himself. From then on, everything outside the self becomes an object for investigation, for scientific projection, virgin ground on which to build his world (1982, p. 10). The Other as subject is erased by the One, single consciousness. The contribution of the Other is unseen, unacknowledged, and unvalued. And the One fails to see that he is enclosing himself into a representative world made in his own image.

The Other becomes nothing but a mirror image of the One. Yet in the process, both the One and the Other are lost. The One does not know himself as partial, the Other is never allowed to be. Neither the masculine nor the feminine are truly known (1977, p. 126) and the only possible relationship is one of identity or possession: 'Percevant l'autre, si j'annule l'écart et la différence entre nous, je deviens l'autre ou je le fais mien' (1997, p. 90).

Irigaray then considers what mediations undergird this system of thought. She argues, with Lacan, that the phallus (a male, totalitarian principle, not Freud's more literal concept) functions as a guarantor of meaning, the ultimate signifier around which everything is organised (1974, p. 49); this ultimate guarantor almost always needs projecting onto a transcendent, perfect guarantor of truth and meaning: God (1992, p. 65).

From this point, Irigaray proceeds to Socrates and Plato and deconstructs the 'analogy of the Cave' (1974, p. 329). A meta-metaphoric of language shapes the dialogue and what takes place: everything is said, perceived and gauged in relation to the Idea. The truth of the Idea takes on an existence of its own, divorced from material reality and experience, and becomes reduced to its signifier, a word, which sums up the phallic logic. The one Idea gathers everything in relation to itself. Copies can be good or bad, a one or a not-one, but not have an identity of their own. Irigaray argues that this original logic has pervaded all philosophy until recently, including feminist attempts to recover 'woman' by including her within the Idea of the overall, equal, human (1999a, p. 156).

The only counter to the logic of the Same is to recognise one's finitude and working *together* to construct identity and a culture that reflects Truth as an embodied principle (1992, p. 72). It involves meeting the Other as Other by making space for both the specific individual with a specific history and genealogy to be heard, *and* an Other who belongs to a specific genre. Irigaray cautions against letting all identity fracture into multiple instantiations. Relationships can only be structured through principles that allow bridges between the individual and the collective (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000, p. 77). For her, sexual difference represents this organising principle that shuns both the One and the many; it is the right organising principle because it is based on a pre-given, natural unity, yet remains to be constructed relationally and socially (Irigaray, 2004b).

Irigaray's analysis offers a key for deconstructing the place of men and women in Judges, as well as the relationship between them, including in its relationship to an overall divine principle (5.1, 5.2).

1.2.1.2. Specularisation

Irigaray's primary aim in *Speculum* is 'bringing out the relationship between a woman and herself and how to constitute the world of the Other as woman' (1992, p. 103). She first identifies the masters of representation, followed by mapping out angled reflections; recognising a feminine presence within the Logic of the Same can only be done in the in-between, the silences: 'Le féminin étant dès lors à déchiffrer comme inter-dit: dans les signes ou entre eux, entre des significations réalisées, entre les lignes' (1974, p. 20).

Irigaray consistently critiques the overemphasis on *looking at* rather than *listening to* in Western philosophical discourse (2008e, p. 231), which turns everything into objects of study rather than partners in learning. Yet she cautions against the temptation to resist all specularisation (1974, p. 178). In keeping with Lacan's mirror stage theory (Lacan,

1949), she argues that reality is always filtered through the eyes, sending back a reverse polarity image to the brain. Human beings need instruments to touch, feel, know themselves: hands, eyes, ears; what they find is then turned into language and self-representation (Irigaray, 1974, p. 288). It is only as a child sees themselves reflected in their mother's eyes, as beloved object, that they can begin to constitute an identity separate from hers, yet belonging to the same generic species; only then can recognition and separation from the Other happen (1985, p.23ff).

What is dangerous is the perversion of ocularisation, when mirror turns to speculum, an instrument that forces open and allows the eyes to see enclosed spaces, to appropriate what is not theirs, to claim and represent the whole of a reality of which they are only a part (1974, p. 180). Within this hegemonic approach, woman cannot 'see' herself anymore, except as what man needs her to be for the construction of himself (1982, p. 62). A mirror replaces the real Other, reduced to silence. Applied to Judges, this will involve an analysis of the need for an inversed Other in the construction of the male psyche, and of what happens when the male is himself inversed (5.1).

1.2.1.3. Welcoming the Other

How then do we make space for the Other to emerge? Is it possible for this forgotten Other to be recovered and allowed to flourish? Irigaray's constructive answer begins with a critique of prominent philosophers of otherness (Lévinas, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida) for turning the Other into a concept rather than a person whose otherness as well as my own is constituted through dialogue between an I and a you (1997, p. 40). They still reflect the logic of the Same, evident in Sartre and Merleau-Ponty's vocabulary of possessing or conquering the Other, and in Lévinas' recourse to an ultimate signifier (God) to see the face of the Other (p. 194).

They risk falling into benevolent patriarchy, where the relationship to the Other is primarily ethical (as in Lévinas). The real person (the primitive, the child, the mad man, the disabled, the worker, the woman) is lumped into this one category to whom the white man, in new maturity, must show compassion (1994, p. 57). They also risk joining together within a movement of solidarity, but being fragmented into individual consciousnesses, simply sharing an external world, a culture, a goal, without being attentive to the Other's subjectivity (1997, p. 72; 2008b, p. 7).

To achieve intersubjectivity, we need to elaborate

> a culture that partially negates us as will or desire of being fully conscious of everything. To achieve a gendered subjectivity is to become the whole of oneself, with the condition of not being the whole of the subject, of consciousness, of being. (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000, p. 74)

Difference becomes a mutual concept: not, 'I am different from' (absolute subjectivity as yardstick) but rather, 'we are different, one from the Other… difference itself ensures the relationship' (p. 86). Identity and subjectivity can then be built, not in relation to an Idea over and against which we define our individual selves, but within intersubjective relationships and their historical, cultural, spatial specificities (1997, p. 165). Each partner can then come to recognise that the Other can never be fully known: instead, the Other forms a border to my own horizon and thereby enables better definition who am I – and not (2008b, p. 95).

Welcoming the Other demands keeping appropriate boundaries for the self and the Other, so that neither defines the terms of the encounter nor allows the Other to do so (2008b, p. 25); welcome does not mean creating a space for them, on our terms, or taking care of them, but rather meeting in a third space that can be shared. The possibility of reading in a third space of encounter between reader and text is one application of the theory to Judges (see 4.1.4.).

1.2.1.4. Sexual/sexuate difference

While Irigaray's conclusions can apply to encounters with any Other and she widens her interest in later work, she maintains that there is something fundamental and paradigmatic about sexual difference (1992, p. 84). She interrogates herself on the lack of thinking about such a fundamental difference, and argues that traditionally, humanity has been divided into two *functions* but not two *genres* (1987a, p. 135). This usually runs along the lines of separating thought and body, empirical and transcendental, reserving thinking and language for men, and practical and bodily tasks to women, mostly due to faulty biological models (1984, p. 135). As a result, women's movements have tended to dismiss the significance of biological difference and privileged talk of equal rights. Irigaray sees this as a regression, because it relegates sexual difference to '*l'immédiateté naturelle*' (natural immediacy), and treats men and women as a 'neutral' persons, thereby precluding the possibility of sexuated rights, appropriate to each gender's own specificity (1992, p. 42). The framing of legal systems and what/who they protect and fail to protect, becomes an important theme of her later work, and could helpfully sustain an analysis of communal decisions in Judges (see 4.2.1.2).

Contra equality feminists, Irigaray argues that biological difference cannot be glossed over, nor reduced to its social implications. Denying it means a return to the Idea of the human being, rather than an appreciation of the reality of being human (1992, p. 69), and prevents human becoming:

> The exclusion of [sexuate] difference from thinking ends in making the two parts between which it exists and the relation between them fall again into a simple naturalness. To be man or to be woman would represent a natural identity to be overcome culturally, while fulfilling the task linked to what is called a 'biological destiny': reproduction. From then on, this dimension of identity is not cultivated as human. (2002a, p. 108)

Irigaray's understanding of what it is to be man/woman is not a pre-existing given, but something that each person must culturally become within their relationships, on the basis of their original, biological difference. Within this becoming, a bridge is created between nature and culture, body and thought (2007, p. 358), the very links that had been severed by the Logic of the Same. Increasing focus on this becoming, on the space between natural given and cultural construct is what leads Irigaray to use the word *sexué* (sexuate) rather than *sexuel* (sexual), as a conscious move away from both phallocentrism and dualism.

1.2.2. Psychoanalysis: making space for the Subject

As Irigaray moves into more constructive discussion, her approach blends the three background disciplines to a greater degree. The discussion of horizons of becoming derives both from her work on the constitution of subjectivity and on the erasure of women's voices by the logic of the same. As I turn to her work on identity and subjectivity, it is worth noting that her approach is psychoanalytical rather than psychological. Psychology focuses on the developmental and chronological, whereas psychoanalysis focuses on structures of thought and identity formation (Whitford, 1991, p. 76).

1.2.2.1. The constitution of subjectivity

Irigaray's use of the term 'subjectivity' is ubiquitous, yet she does not define it until *Sharing the World* (2008b): 'the centre from which the Other organises the whole of himself, or herself' (p.86). Subjectivity is not just about saying 'I' (self-representation), but about the generic representation of the speaking subject as a he or she (1992, p. 112). Once a subject becomes the object of Others' communication, it can be constituted as a subject who can speak for themselves and enter the economy of exchange between subjects (1985, p. 85). The subject then needs to name the Other in his/her turn, lest

he/she remain an object of discourse. Analysis of speech patterns reveals the dynamics between subjects and their differential access to self-representation (1993, p. 12).

Subjectivity however cannot be studied as an object, because the Other is, ultimately, unknowable. One can come near him/her, but not know him/her fully. Here Irigaray resumes her critique of the autonomous self and its incarnation in scientific approaches. Scientific discourse claims to be objective, neutral, and therefore sets itself up as judge over other discourses (1985, p. 7). Different subjectivities, and therefore understandings of Subjectivity, can only emerge when impersonal speech is abandoned, when the One gives up the illusion of being an absolute subject, pure act, and recognises itself as acted upon.

Women have traditionally been objects of speech within systems of exchange created by men, and therefore lacked an available mediation towards self-representation and speaking the Other. Women work as the fixed reference points, the mirrors of male constructions of subjectivity. As such, they cannot have their own representations, discourse or desires, as this would threaten male totalitarian constructs (1974, p. 165). For women to construct subjectivity, a new discourse must emerge, though any female *autonomous* discourse would replicate phallocentrism. Irigaray does not argue for two separate systems of representation, but for dialogue to give birth to a different system that would reflect man, woman, and the relationship between them.

For this move to be possible, subjects need to reconnect with the influences and connections that shape who they are: genealogies, cultures, history, location. Philosophical axioms such as *cogito*, or Sartre's existential autonomous consciousness, fail to account for the deep impact that Others have on the constitution of the inner self right from birth (1997, p. 62). Irigaray argues that as human beings are born, they enter a complex system of relationships from which they will constitute their subjectivity (1983, p. 149). The body, often dismissed in favour of the mind, is the place of first belonging to this network of relations, and a determining factor in the constitution of subjectivity (2008b). Bodily relations dictate that the route into subjectivity will differ for boys and girls, since the former's first relation is inter-generic, whereas the latter's is intra-generic: a different *relational identity* (1993, p. 13).

This different relational identity ensures that human beings are neither pure nature nor pure culture: shaped, but not determined. The Other allows both the limited (what I am not) and the unlimited (belonging to a genre) to shape the burgeoning self (1997, p. 165).

Boundaries enable the self to know itself, and return to itself securely; encounter with the absolute enables the self to look beyond itself and welcome the Other. The gesture of recognition between two Others allows each one to receive a 'presence that is proper to them' and thereby know themselves more fully (2008b, p. 51). When this relational constitution of subjectivity does not occur, the Other is perceived as a threat to identity and becomes one to be possessed, exchanged, or annihilated (1992, p. 196). Irigaray's analysis of properly and improperly constituted subjectivity opens a way into understanding some of the human dynamics that lead to the chain of events described in Judges 19-21, in their interplay between individual and collective identity (see Chapter 5).

1.2.2.2. Identity

Irigaray (2002, p. 69) repeatedly speaks of identity, a concept linked but not identical to, subjectivity. She eschews defining her own concept from the outset, but starts with deconstructing existing philosophical/psychological definitions. Within both disciplines, identity has largely been seen as 'being the same with itself' (p. 69). Irigaray rejects this on two fronts. First, for being solipsistic and failing to 'furnish the mediations for co-belonging' in a world where Others do not necessarily share the same 'Being' (*ibid*.). Second, for abstracting identity from physicality and making it an identity of thinking and being, because physicality would inevitably entail relationships of dependency and co-belonging (1997, p. 59). This leads to static concepts of identity (letting oneself be where one already is) and defining relationships as a meeting of two concepts, two disembodied consciences, rather than integrated people, in a return to the Socratic Idea to which one tries to conform themselves. There follows a continual 'looking back', a longing to 'go home', to 'return' to the self, the past, the given identity (2013, p. 144).

Irigaray's own concept of identity is dynamic and mediated, poised between being and becoming, between natural given and social construction (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000, p. 159). 'Becoming' is never solipsistic: cultivating one's natural identity is 'becoming more able to elaborate a universe of relations faithful to the self and capable of communication with the Other' (p. 159). She also argues for the necessity of a generic identity, to enable living within a horizon of becoming. A lack of a generic horizon risks disintegration into a multitude of disconnected parts, with no obvious focus for the self to be held together. Defining a generic horizon too tightly, however, becomes essentialist and subject to abuse, with the risk of creating a conceptual identity that does not match lived reality - such as traditional gender roles (1992, p. 168). Being part of a humanity that is two enables a matrix of identity to be established, constantly evolving in the place between

nature and culture where relational identity emerges (2008a, p. 91). While Irigaray concentrates on gender, her reflections on identity offer rich material for thought on identity both individual and collective, and how threats to identity may affect relations between groups and individuals (see 5.1; 5.2).

Relational identity implies the relevance of location: time, space, culture, history, nation, genealogy, all factors which interweave the self with the journey of Others and the representations, language and images that undergird them (1997, p. 104; 2008a, p. 52). Social changes and differences are not the same as identity changes. Because identity is deeply embedded in the subconscious life and in relationships, she rejects the idea that one can simply choose one's identity, accept or reject social concepts of gender, as this presupposes a single, independent subject rather than people in relations (2008a, p. 91).

Embodiment in time and place leads to 'temporal weaving' (2008b, p. 80), the narrative that undergirds self-representation. This narrative tends to be 'masterful', an attempt to explain the self and the world around itself. Meeting the Other, especially for the first time, is always a challenge because it creates 'a tear in our temporal weaving' (*ibid*.), something that interrupts our narrative from the outside and prevents mastery by the One. The Other threatens to take the self in a new, unforeseen direction. Irigaray argues that in true relationships, this will lead to a shared movement of becoming. In other cases, one narrative will seek to prevail over the Other, or one narrative will collapse (sometimes willingly) into the other. The presence of the Other inherently places limits on the self, limits which may be accepted as life-giving (creating) or death-bringing (shattering the existing – if mistaken – concept of self). This struggle between narratives will be explored fully in relation to Judges 19-21 (5.1).

1.2.2.3. The possibility of intersubjectivity

One of Irigaray's main speculative interests is the conditions needed for intersubjectivity. Following her assertion that representation and symbol are key to the relational life, she argues that language is what enables human beings to mediate relational life, that is to suspend instincts, go beyond pulsions, and move into desire (2001, p. 2). Desire motivates relating to the Other, though not necessarily respect for them. The difference between constructive and destructive desire depends on identity and control of reality. The logic of the same produces a desire for mastery and possession of the Other, to assimilate him/her into the One, as per Sartre (1997, p. 40ff). There, language is used as an instrument of mastery (appropriating reality by naming it). Irigaray suggests that the way

forward is to move from sensation to perception. Sensation does not elaborate self and Other as self and Other; it reduces encounter to the sensible, and yields oppressive or conflictual relationships: 'Quand la sensation est agréable, elle pousse à désirer, à s'approprier. Si elle est déplaisante, elle provoque la fuite, le mépris, le rejet' (1997, p. 91). Perception on the other hand requires relinquishing a little immediate sensoriality and striving to see the other as Other, whose interiority, body and subjectivity must be respected and desired for what they are. Only then can intersubjectivity be born.

Intersubjectivity writes itself on the canvas of silence. Silence is not necessarily negative, but essential to speech. If everybody spoke at once, there would be no meaning, no dialogue, and intended meanings would be altered (1974, p. 318). Silence is what enables the Other to speak, to represent themselves, both literally (speech that is listened to) and metaphorically (giving the Other the space to be themselves, the place where 'I' am not). Positive silence is not pregnant with assumptions and pre-conceptions of meaning. It requires language to have a certain openness: to the fact that while we share signifiers, we invest them with slightly (or vastly) different signified (1992, p. 182). It is therefore imperative to listen to both the grammar of discourse and the grammar of silence (1977, p. 73) – to hear what kind of Other is present, what is left unsaid, what is assumed, what is left open, what is forced, what is free (see 4.4). This may prompt readers and critics to ask reflective questions of their own silence before the Other in a text.

1.2.3. 'La propriété des espaces imaginaires': linguistics and representation

1.2.3.1. Linguistic analysis

Irigaray's interest in language permeates her work and shapes her approach to other disciplines. Her analysis of Plato in *Speculum* initiated her thinking on inappropriate mediations and the divorce of a system of signs and symbols from their real-world referents (1974). The recurrent term, 'l'étalonnage de la vérité' highlights how truth is measured against an abstract system rather than what she calls the Real or 'l'immédiateté sensible' (1992, p. 168). Irigaray majors on the issue in her volume on Heidegger (1983). Heidegger subjects everything to language, so that nothing exists outside of it. Irigaray argues that people have let themselves be imprisoned by language, so that they live in a house constructed by pre-existing concepts, unable to step out and journey towards the Other, the different, the new. Language reduces everything to common memory and common sharing, a tool to appropriate Others and the world (2013, p. 60).

While she uses Saussurian terminology, Irigaray is highly critical of structuralist and post-structuralist efforts, which she calls 'nihilistic games' (1999, p. 13). Their study of the definition of terms moved to the study of the relations between them, with a focus on functional symbols rather than complete beings. A degree of indeterminacy is accepted, yet a decisive role is still played by *universal* signifiers and an overall system of signs (1977, p. 106). Irigaray disagrees: 'words never truly express the reality of things. And the appreciation of their truth is better revealed in dialogue with the Other (with her, or Her) in questioning exchange with the one who inspires desire and meaning' (2013, p. 47). Just as identity is relational, so is speech, hence Irigaray's focus on *parole* as opposed to *langue*. The former represents the incarnation of speech within dynamic relationships, as it unfolds, the latter, an alleged system spoken by all, or a message already spoken and reduced to its final meaning (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 42). She does consider wider systems, and warns against the risk of reducing language to idiolects, but argues that one needs to explore the deeper structures that undergird linguistic constructs and choices.

Irigaray consistently explores how speech, meaning and communication are 'engendered and brought through the subject's psyche, his/her story, his/her relationship to the world and the Other' (p. 42). A triple 'operation of appropriation' (2002, p. 36) occurs when words are spoken: between speaking subject and the language (*langue*) within which they are already situated, between subject and the external reality they are seeking to name, and between subject and Other (the interlocutor). Analysing speech requires paying attention to each of these and the direction of travel between words and speaker, and to configurations of speakers and listeners. Always, the stakes of enunciation are crucial: as one can never say 'everything', every locution represents a complex choice of what is said and left unsaid (1985). All analysis therefore needs to be both syntagmatic and paradigmatic, and pay as much attention to silence and context as to speech itself.

Irigaray scrutinises grammatical forms. Pronouns are foundational in representation and self-representation, for what they reveal of relationships (subject-object, problematic objectification of subjects, commonalities between persons) and as the linguistic trace of the unifying subject behind every utterance (1985, p. 186). Substantives, with their multiplicity of potential relations, necessitate interrogating all other terms of an enunciation for other potential ways of being-put-in-relation (*ibid*.). Verbs encourage subject-object relations and function as 'the instrument of construction of the subject, of the world, of the relation with the Other' (2002a, p. 60). Speech is the locus of the construction of the human as such, something with the potential to go beyond an

appropriation of the world into a sharing of it, though this sharing through speech will only ever be partial as two subjects invariably invest signifiers with different meanings which the Other will only be able to hear partially (2013, p. 68). Such close linguistics analysis will undergird my analysis of narrative dynamics throughout chapter 4.

Irigaray's next move is to argue that language is never neutral/neuter[3] (1985, p. 20). The axiom is central to her analysis of language as sexuated. This is not negative *per se*. She contends that language is necessarily sexuated as it is spoken by sexuated subjects. What is negative is the monopoly of the system of representation by one gender and the assertion that what is essentially dominated by the One is actually neutral. Too many philosophers are lured by the idea of neutrality; Irigaray argues they are blind to their own bias because they are so wrapped up in their own language that they have forgotten its origins and the reasons for its structuring (1984, p. 127). Yet power dynamics dictate that they try and retain mastery of language by claiming its universality (1987a, p. 152).

Irigaray bases her assertions on empirical research into the representation of men and women through languages (1987b; 1990b; 2001). She points to the quasi-universal syntactic priority of the masculine over the feminine, so that women only exist as women if they are between women, the attribution of grammatical genre, the connotations of feminine *vs* masculine concepts and nouns, the ambiguous place of the grammatical neutral/neuter (1990a, p. 40). She also analyses patterns that reinforce the status-quo, such as the masculine preference for subject-object utterances which translate appropriation and mastery, versus a subject-subject orientation in women within which the 'I' often dissolves into the 'you' and fails to maintain the identity of both self and Other (2001, p. 6). Furthermore, she points to the monopoly of men over the arts, story-telling and writing as monopoly over forms of representation and differential access to shaping language; as a result, women enter the realm of speech primarily by borrowing male systems of representation (1977, p. 81). Irigaray does not deny that women have had something to contribute, or any way of speaking. Rather, she argues that even when they do so, this is primarily within the constraints of male speech and symbols, or by consciously trying to subvert the masculine, rather than having the space and freedom to articulate female subjectivity positively, between women, in open relation with men.

[3] The French *neutre* holds both meanings.

1.2.3.2. 'Volées, violées, voilées': the representation of women

Irigaray's considerations on language are tightly connected with her critique of the representation of women. She argues that a conceptual system of the Idea turns everything into representation. Instead of perceiving first, apprehending the world through our senses, we start with a concept of what we meet, and shape our response accordingly (2013, p. 29ff): we encounter an *idea of the real*, rather than the real itself. The Other then no longer exists as Other but only as a projection of our own desire, with no space for dialogue (2008e, p. 236). Here Irigaray returns to her contention that woman, the Other, is used as a prop for the elaboration of male identity, as she reflects back his self-representation, rather than her own perception of his identity and her own, different, identity.

The concept of 'woman' has been conquered from the inside, by man absorbing her into himself (an ironic reversal of his own journey of origins); what is left is the 'Idea' of woman, an idea that dictates that 'all women should resemble each other, except for some flaws or familial qualities, whereas men should be encouraged to assert themselves, make their mark, open new paths, suggest new models…' (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 32). One could object here that men are also expected to conform to an Idea of man and all be the same; however, this isn't exactly what Irigaray has in mind. Rather, being a 'good woman' is about staying within the boundaries of the familiar, of the hearth; being a 'good man' involves confronting the outside, the different, the new. Irigaray makes much of the public/private dichotomy applied to differential expectations of men and women (1994) and how this has led to stereotyped roles, differential value accorded to different activities and difficulties in enabling women's contribution to culture to be heard, since they are usually imprisoned into the domestic/private sphere (1992, pp. 30-70). The discussion will be relevant to the dynamics of the concubine's actions at the outset of Judges 19 and the portrayal of women more generally (see 4.2.2, 4.3.2.3).

In analysing representations of women, Irigaray examines contemporary culture, history, and myths and foundational stories (including Biblical stories). She analyses Greek myth in detail (which gives clues to her literary methods), looking for values, motifs and configurations of relationships (1987a, p. 14). Her study of the traditional myths that surround the establishment of patriarchy is particularly pertinent. Initially, these stories take the form of the abduction of a woman (or many) by a man/men, usually followed by war over the rights of property over these women, as in the rape of the Sabine women. Irigaray encourages thinking of those myths within the tradition and history to which they

belong, and the social function they perform. Resonances with the end of Judges are obvious (see 4.3.2.7 and 5.2).

Irigaray's interest leads her to consider persistent myths, in a traditional Marxist-feminist analysis. Women belong to one of three categories: mothers, virgins or prostitutes (1977, p. 180ff). As mother, woman is defined by nature and physicality. She is a domestic, private person, a reproductive instrument that belongs to the father. She functions as property and worker. As virgin, she represents pure exchange value: 'rien que la possibilité, le lieu, le signe, les relations entre les hommes' (p. 180). When she passes from virgin to woman/mother, she disappears from exchanges between men and is relegated to private property. As prostitute, the split between usefulness and exchange is less obvious. She is implicitly tolerated, yet explicitly condemned. It is her body's temporary usefulness that confers her value: she is usage being exchanged; she has value because she has already been used. Out of these three roles emerge representations of female sexuality:

> Les caractères de la sexualité (dite) féminine en découlent: valorisation de la reproduction et du nourrissage; fidélité; pudeur, ignorance, voire désintérêt du plaisir; acceptation passive de l'activité des hommes; séduction pour susciter le désir des consommateurs, mais s'offrant comme support matériel à celui-ci sans en jouir. (1977, p. 182)

'Real' women are occulted, hidden, erased from official culture (1980, p. 120): *volées* (abducted, actively removed, co-opted to the needs of the Other), *violées* (raped, forced into being who they are not), *voilées* (veiled, removed from sight, imprisoned into the private realm). The combination of stereotypical representation and lack of representation have produced barriers of shame, internalised by women, which makes piercing through the 'clothes of representation' difficult (1974, p. 178). This, she thinks, is part of the reason for the resistance of many women to elaborating new models of femininity, and for the lure of the neutral (1992, p. 110).

Irigaray therefore interweaves three complex strands in her analysis of a Western culture, theoretical strands matched by thematic strands that run across her work. These themes are more practical in their focus and proposals, and explore the distortions in human relationships and identity yielded by the Logic of the Same.

1.3. Bridges across three fields

1.3.1. The shape of oppression

1.3.1.1. Patriarchy

Irigaray's concern with the practical outworkings of the underlying grammar of discourse leads her to analyse the shape of patriarchy and highlight what needs exploring when considering a text, situation or story.

First, in Marxist fashion, she argues that women have consistently been reduced to their reproductive function, the receptacle for men's seed; woman becomes fertile ground, factory, or bank, who cannot claim the produce of her body as her own property, as she, herself, is merely property as a means of reproduction (1974, p. 16). Woman does not enter the reproductive economy on her own terms, looking for something of her own, whether pleasure, status or affirmation (when woman does want something for herself, it is usually something of value within the logic of the dominant male economy). Furthermore, woman's reproductive value is tied to the sex of her offspring: only the boy child guarantees true reproduction for the name-of-the-father, within a patriarchal order organised around the father as head of the family, whose name determines appropriation of people and goods. Irigaray admits that the pattern is changing, but argues that the move is easier for men, who have always had access to public life and multiple facets of identity.

Irigaray then uses Marx to critique Freud's overemphasis on the sexual at the expense of the social. Marx sets the way men relate to women within the matrix of how they relate to all, especially with regards to exploitation (1974, p. 150). Within the patriarchal economy, women become both goods and objects of exchange between men. Women are property bought by contract, usually between father and husband, in a bargaining process in which the daughter's virginity is value added to an overall financial/material deal (p. 152). The men establish a person-to-person relationship, recognise each other as private property owners. The women remain (largely) objects, without any means of maintaining a relationship to their own origins: they are inscribed in men's lineage, leaving their own family, house, name (already patronymic) to take on their husband's (p. 35). Within such an economy, it is hard to see how women could have a voice, or access to justice, let alone voice their own desires, since they cannot participate as subjects. Instead, their main option is to stoke the desire of the buyer(s) (p. 147). Irigaray's approach is particularly suited to deconstructing texts such as the Levite-concubine-father

triangle of Judges 19 (see 4.2.2). Irigaray cautions that in a phallic economy, women are led to want to bargain from within, and demand privileges equal to the men's; unless women come to a realisation and articulation of their own otherness and specificity, all they can do is envy the men and demand equality, whilst presenting themselves as victims of phallic narcissism. She also repeatedly underlines that the phallic economy damages both male and female identity, and that both men and women contribute to its perpetuation through their reactions to the imbalance of rights and duties between them (1998, p. 92).

1.3.1.2. Violence

Irigaray identifies violence as a natural by-product of a culture that seeks to assert the supremacy of the One over Others. Yet she does not offer one analysis of gender violence. Instead, her thought is peppered with references to violence as something to be expected and a fact of history. Her exploration of philosophy highlights the long-held assumption of *mimesis* between anatomy and psychology, between physical characteristics/sexual function and general behaviour, such as the routine association between male and active, and female and passive (1974, p. 11). Cases in point include Freud's reduction of eroticism to a male drive of aggression, Plato's identification of women with inert, unaffected matter (p. 216), and Sartre's assertion that desire can only be accomplished through possession (1997, p. 37).

Ultimately, Irigaray argues that man lives in a constant struggle against nature (which woman represents), lived out through gestures and instruments of domination: tools, language, intellect and passions (1997, p. 126). Man wants the world to conform to his Idea of it, and fights against the dichotomy between the world created through language and ideas, and the (real) world of nature. The relationship to nature is confined to the home, the sphere of bodily contact and reproduction, the place of the woman and her children. The dichotomy between private and public spheres implicitly encourages the exploitation of nature, and disregards sexual violence (p. 146).

Within the Logic of the Same, all difference is framed as quantitative. The Other is one who is more or less than myself, in relation to an Absolute; relationships of competition ensue, and confrontation about each other's values (2008a, p. 81). Only a move towards another type of difference, not hierarchical but qualitative, can open up a way towards peace. Irigaray can sound idealistic here, but elsewhere, she tempers her faith in a

different path with a recognition that even in the best of worlds, meeting otherness will always be a threat, or disruption:

> The other interrupts the system of cross-references of my world, re-opens my horizon and questions its finality. As such, the other undoes the familiarity that was mine. The other is always a stranger who crosses the limits of my territory and upsets my habits. My first gesture will thus be a gesture of refusal, of rejection, at best of integration or assimilation. In any case, the otherness of the other, the difference between us, is abolished. (2008b, p. 97)

This is where Irigaray encourages the move from sensation to perception, so that this first gesture can be reframed and followed by a second, educated gesture that chooses to apprehend the Other differently.

Finally, Irigaray traces violence against women to a lack of *sexuated* rights and civil identity of their own. For most of history, violence against women has appeared as a social fact, almost a habitual right, on which communities tend to stay silent (1999a, p. 147). If a man is violent towards a woman, laws and practices treat him as guilty with regards to his conscience, or God, possibly even other men, but not specifically towards her (see 5.3). Irigaray questions the categorisation of rape as a crime like others, in a way that does not acknowledge its effect on subjectivity and personhood. She argues rape is

> …a particular way of violating an individual in their body, and in their private and public dignity… an act [which] touches the body insofar as it is linked with the spirit: it is not just a matter of possessing the body of the other but of penetrating the sphere of their intimacy. Furthermore, it is a sexed felony, one which entails above all an infraction of the relations between individuals. (1994, p. 180)

Because sex is still relegated to the private realm, women are not protected in their sexuated identity, *as women*, and they lack the words and concepts to express what has happened to them within a public, legal setting. The only antidote, as far as Irigaray is concerned, is for a positive definition of the rights of women as sexuated persons to emerge, with specific rights and responsibilities, and specific vulnerabilities that may require protection in law.

1.3.2. Contexts for meeting the Other

Irigaray goes beyond an analysis of patriarchy and violence and considers the complex network of relationships and concepts that undergird and reflect the logic of the same, and creates distorted patterns of relating to the different Others that are part of human

existence. Specifically, she examines relationships to transcendence and religion, to immanence and embodiment, to situatedness in time and place as reflected in culture, three threads ever-present in her analysis, to be reflected in an Irigarayan approach.

1.3.2.1. The transcendental Other: religion and belief

Irigaray wrote extensively on religion in general (1996; 1987a) and Christianity in particular (1980), though she is not consistent in her arguments. She often expands views drawn from Feurbach and the idea of projection, yet other texts follow a hermeneutic of suspicion and retrieval and seek to go back to primary texts and practices, while deconstructing layers of interpretation (1996). Her constructive proposals with regards to religion focus on the idea of the divine as ultimate horizon of being, an ultimate projection of identity. As such, there is little space in her thought for constructing the divine as a true Other who may speak and live independently (see 5.1.3.); curiously she never addresses the question of the *relationship* with the divine, the in-between of the divine-human relationship.

Nonetheless, her analysis of human constructions of and projections onto the divine have much to offer. Her basic argument is that God has become the guarantor of the logic of the One, the ultimate unifying principle (1992). She goes back to Descartes and argues that behind 'I think therefore I am' is an underlying 'I think therefore God is' (1974, p. 233). For Descartes' 'truth' to be universal and applicable, man needs some form of universal truth, a guarantor of the objectivity of his ideas as external, objective realities. Man projects this ideal of an independent, unifying principle onto God, a God that must be independent and not in need of anyone else to guarantee his existence. God is (subconsciously) conferred both existence and boundaries by man's needs. God becomes the guarantor of language, of the system of signs and symbols that define perception and the ordering of reality, thereby reinforcing the ability of the subject to legislate about what is outside of itself. True revelation becomes dangerous because it breaches the system elaborated. Instead, divine command is usually used to reinforce what a subject 'knows' to be their duty (1974, p. 263). This logic underlies the tribes' enquiries to a terse Yahweh in chapters 20-21 (see 5.1.3).

Irigaray argues that God then becomes imprisoned into the system of signs that imprisons men and women by defining what they see without truly attending to lived experience. Because God is one and only one, gender difference becomes either excluded or collapsed into the One, and the only God available through language is a male God, who reflects this

totalitarian principle. Women's own gender is devalorised by not being represented in idealised form within the divine. Irigaray argues that 'God' is needed, but a God that offers a model for different generic identities and the possibility of difference:

> Dieu est l'autre dont nous avons absolument besoin. Nous avons besoin du présentiment d'un accomplissement pour devenir, non d'un objectif figé, d'un Un postulé immutable, mais d'une cohésion et d'un horizon qui assurent, pour nous, le passage entre passé et future, le pont du présent *qui se souvient*, n'est pas pure perte dans l'oubli, ni émiettement de notre existence, notamment par déréliction. (1987a, p. 79)

Irigaray never defines this God beyond mere possibility, though she suggests that the Christian concept of Trinity, however misused, has the potential to break the domination of the One (1980). There is something crucial about God, and God-talk, as providing this bridge of the present that remembers, about the past not falling into oblivion, yet not utterly conditioning the future. The notion of bridging past, present and future into one horizon of dynamic meaning is essential to the discussion of Judges as sacred text (4.1.4, 5.4).

1.3.2.2. The sensible Other: bodies and physicality

Irigaray argues that these traditional constructs of the divine drive human beings away from their physicality and sensible awareness, into a world of ideas divorced from lived experience. Much of her writing therefore examines what it means to meet the Other within the context of the sensible, and to develop an appropriate understanding of otherness and physicality. She takes issue with both classical philosophy and its divide between body and soul (1974), and the contemporary reluctance of feminist writers to engage with bodily difference as a valid category (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000).

Irigaray bases her notion of difference on the initial physical difference between men and women, which leads to other differences when constructing subjectivity (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 95). Her argument is not for simple *mimesis*, unlike Freud (1974, p. 11), but for an acknowledgement of constructed difference arising out of physical differentiation; while the biological data is stable, the different relational identity constructed from it is not. She rejects feminist critics afraid of re-essentialising difference: 'It cannot be harmful to a woman to discover the reality of her biological economy. What harms her is to be subjected to a science which is not appropriate for her, or to be reduced to a simple nature' (1974, p. 151).

Irigaray goes back through Western philosophy to trace the divorce between body and soul and its consequences for intersubjectivity, from Plato and the basic attribution of value to the Idea over a distorted vision of the material world (1974); to Descartes conferring himself existence through a verb, rather than tying existence to being engendered and given birth, physically and spiritually (1974, p. 229); to Hegel and the subject-object dialectic (1997, p. 42). Much Western philosophy has concentrated on the encounter with the world, and the Other, as perception through the mind, an appreciation by the subject of the object of the encounter. Relating to the Other then becomes an encounter between two disembodied, abstract consciences subject to evaluation against the universal Real, rather than between integrated people (p. 59). Physical encounter is thereby reduced to sensation rather than perception, and physicality seen as a constraint, a barrier to freedom that one must overcome.

Irigaray argues for a reversal of the trend: that nature and instincts are something to be cultivated, interrogated and understood. The body is the place of first belonging to the network of relationships that enable subjectivity, and the place where all knowing starts: nothing can be apprehended unless it comes through the senses first (Mulder, 2002, p. 177). This analysis of the displacement of origins from the sensible to the spiritual, from the mother to the father, is foundational to Irigaray's thought, at work in the erasure of female genealogies, in the allocation of spiritual power and knowledge to the father and the relegation of the woman-mother to the purely sensible.

This dichotomy is clear in the symbolisation of the body in human exchanges and relationships. She points to circumcision as the entrance of the male body into the world of signs and the spiritualisation of the male (1980, p. 87). The rituals associated with women's bodies codify their physical belonging and meaning in very different ways, often reduced to maternity and the stages of women's life with respect to fertility: puberty, loss of virginity, maternity, menopause (2008b, p. 135). These stages and their symbolic value define the basis of men's exchanges of women (1977, p. 170): the transfer of a right to virginity from a woman herself to her father and prospective husband, or in contemporary society the commercialisation of women's bodies in advertising that relies on encoded sexual meaning (1998, p. 88). The body is represented, codified, in ways that occlude the Real and prevent personal integration and recognition of difference.

1.3.2.3. The constructed Other: space, time and culture

Beyond transcendence and integrated bodily existence, Irigaray explores the relationship to the Other in terms of the changing construction of subjectivity that occurs through situatedness in space and time, this space between transcendence and immanence where culture and history lie.

She shares the postmodern view of official history as slanted and partial (Lotringer and Irigaray, 2000, p. 65) and privileging male values, so that only women who share those values are recognised. Nevertheless, she insists on the importance of listening to this history, and the Other within it: not just the invisible Other written out or disregarded, nor just the victorious Other, but all Others, recognising their own subjectivity and paying attention to the interrelatedness of their different identity constructs. She offers a mode of analysis that is neither feminist in the traditional sense, nor mainstream, but seeks to locate all voices and explore the space within which they interact and shape one another. When one voice has sought to dominate and tell the whole from the point of view of the One, then deconstruction, but not destruction, is needed (2008b, p. ix). This means resisting holding one subjectivity over another, and being critical whilst 'not seeking to destroy an entire tradition' (1997, p. 161, *my translation*). Within this study, this will mean an exploration of communal as well as private dynamics, listening to the concubine as well as the Levite, and exploring the space within which they interact and how it is shaped by other relationships and constructions of communal identity (see chapter 5).

History (and its writings) is key to understanding how a subject came to be, individually and communally. In philosophy, Irigaray says, time governs a subject's interiority, and space, their exteriority. The subject then mediates the passage between time and space as they organise the world into a narrative of meaning (1984, p. 15). Irigaray adds an additional factor: the linking together of two temporalities, which forms new bridges between past and future through intersubjective relationships (2008b, p. 78). The constructs they share as they build those bridges become culture. Any change in time and space prompts a change in the construction of subjectivity. Irigaray consistently berates psychoanalysis and psychology for not taking enough account of the role of culture in identity formation and subconscious processes (1985, p. 256). While each individual is an individual, much of what they consider theirs is actually held in common with those who share their location within space and time, their freedom shaped and bound by 'the relational weaving from which they thought it was distinguished' (2008b, p. 65).

Relating to the past, to the Other in history, therefore involves a complex operation of acknowledging the boundedness of both self and Other by cultural norms. So, for instance, Irigaray critiques feminist writers for using the words 'equality' and 'freedom' without always asking the meaning of those words within their context, but, even more crucially, without interrogating the very conditions for the existence of those words (1997, p. 153).

Relating to the past operates on two axes, one individual, the other communal. Every individual has a (relational) history which shapes present relationships (1997, p. 57). Recognising both subjects' personal history is essential in communication; their communal (i.e. historical, local and cultural) history is equally important, for what they share, or not. Any encounter involves coming out of one's own territory and venturing into a shared space. This shared space is never blank, but 'already populated by culture, history, language' (2008b, p. 14), and each subject must learn how to be themselves within this shared landscape without trying to appropriate it. Crucially, Irigaray stresses the difficulty of 'not appropriating' this shared space when it is mediated through writing: 'Le langage procède toujours d'un début à une fin, d'un passé à un futur, mais comme il recourt, forcément, à l'écriture, ce progrès est toujours en passe de se retourner' (1974, p. 370). The Other encoded in writing is frozen in the past, at increased risk of being turned into an object of study appropriated by a later subject. Instead, Irigaray talks of 'being faithful to the past' yet 'shaping anew' both past and future through new ways of working and relating (1994, p. 41).

Central to Irigaray's endeavour to hear the Other is her investigation of liminality (1983). She contends that philosophy has forgotten air as the space between the One and the Other, the element that enables breath and therefore individual existence as well as the possibility of communication (*parole*). This then functions as a metaphor for how 'spaces between' are forgotten, and human beings try to act upon the Other without attending to the space they need to share. To counter this, she interrogates mediations and ceaselessly brings out the gaps in narratives, the gaps in conversations onto which the Other inscribes themselves, and the figurative spaces of liminality, the symbolic of the in-between, of transitions and the mechanics of change.

Irigaray therefore proposes a complex framework for analysis that enables the Other to be listened to and encountered as subject, whether they are present or past. Analysis needs to attend to three interrelated factors: the transcendent, the immanent and the

spaces between the two, the unstable, changing shapes of time and space within which subjectivity is constructed.

1.3.3. Of the Other: Woman

Throughout her listening to philosophy, psychoanalysis and linguistics, Irigaray attempts to bring out the silent and silenced voices of women, and begins to sketch out what being 'woman' means, can mean, and possibly should mean. This 'being woman' is inextricably linked to what 'being man' is, and to what 'being together' means. This final section will explore the conditions Irigaray argues are needed to enable faithful generic identities to emerge.

1.3.3.1. Genealogies

Consistently with her focus on relational identity, Irigaray stresses the importance of relationship to origins. She laments the reduction of woman to mother, well-evidenced in Freud's summary of centuries, even millennia, of practice (1974, pp. 13-90). Mother, rather than woman, serves as a paradigm in gender relationships: a woman's horizon of becoming is encapsulated in motherhood, and a man's desire is for a wife who will reproduce the Idea of mother. While Freudian concepts may be limited, Irigaray draws out some general principles, such as the expectation that women's own desire will be for what man wants her to be, the appeal to motherhood as women's biological destiny, the hijacking of children through the transmission of the father's name, and conversely, the tendency for women to yield to this logic themselves to gain social capital.

The reduction of women to motherhood effectively deprives them of social contingency by reducing them to a private function within the patriarchal economy (1987a, p. 126), thereby hampering their ability to develop a generic identity as women. Motherhood itself can become divorced from relationships between women as a woman needs to leave her mother and enter her husband's genealogy to become mother (p. 145). This isolation of the daughter from her own genealogy is clearly played out in Judges 19 (see 4.3.2.3). Reducing motherhood to a natural and private function removes it from the realm of active participation (2007, p. 357). Woman is expected to protect life, protect a child as a duty towards the Other (husband and child), rather than towards herself (1987a, p. 146). The protection of women for themselves and as themselves, is not a priority, as they are expected to give themselves to the Other as part of their 'natural destiny' (p. 146). Irigaray argues that this perception of motherhood is at the root of the lack of protection for women's bodily integrity.

Furthermore, erasing female genealogies leads to problematic relationships to origins for both men and women. Irigaray links the erasure of women's genealogies to a denial of origins and of links to physicality and embodiment, which undergirds man's appropriation of a culture of the mind and soul (1990a, p. 32). There ensues an over-valorisation of the male child, and a disruption of mother-daughter relationships, since both are prisoners of the maternity logic and cannot relate as two women: daughters are only mothers-in-waiting (1979). If mothers and daughters become free from this role within male genealogies, they can 'become' as women, and enter into true relationships with each other and with the male Other, relationships within which dual origin can be recognised and acknowledged as shaping identity.

1.3.3.2. Being/becoming woman

Irigaray's talk of belonging to a generic identity is by no means uncontroversial. She nevertheless defends the notion as essential to psychological well-being, and presents an argument that carefully avoids essentialism. Generic identity is about creating links between the individual and the universal; without it, individuals fragment into a multitude of idiosyncrasies and a false sense of individuality. She holds that the universal needs to be incarnated within the particular, so individuality exists within a wider horizon that provides limits. This ability to see oneself as limited rather than 'free' (freedom being defined here as lack of boundaries) is the essential precondition to relations with the Other that do not seek to possess the Other or surrender the self to them.

Constituting a female identity however is no easy task. Women, in most linguistic systems, only exist as a genre if they are between women (1990a, p. 40). How can one speak the Other when the only language available has been shaped by the One? Faced with their erasure from the dominant system of signs, women are led to try and bargain for a right to speak within that system, rather than define an identity proper to their genre (1974, p. 148). The only tools available are to present herself as victim, seek equality, or take control of power and reverse, but not abolish, the economy of the same; or pretend to use a so-called neutral speech which does not do justice to differing identities (1984, p. 105). In either case, no specific generic identity, constructed both from within and in dialogue with the Other can emerge. If something does emerge, it risks being seen as an add-on to what is already there, rather than something new representing a different way of constructing identity (1985, p. 291).

If and when women attempt to move away from this logic, the only language available to them is the one they have inherited; the categories of being, the ones they know. When male categories and definitions are taken away, a blank space remains, yet one marked by the imprint of male constraints (1982, p. 60ff). Irigaray powerfully uses the image of a house; man may be forced out, but the walls remain, the boundaries which hold a woman's sense of who she is. If the walls collapse, she may disintegrate. Feminine identity, therefore, cannot be constructed instantly, *ex nihilo*, to replace what has stood in its place. Instead, Irigaray argues the need for the process she herself evidences: patient deconstruction of layers of identity construction over time and space so that a journey can be traced back, and women can find themselves, and other women, here and there, in the reverse of the male tapestry of identity, and recover traces of who they are to start building their becoming (p. 61).

Here Irigaray enters the more controversial part of her constructive proposals. Faithful generic identity cannot be built in isolation, but relies on relationships. Yet traditional models of communication are not intersubjective but based on information exchange; to develop intersubjectivity, men need to renounce their domination of the subjective economy, and women need to move out of the prison of being either mothers or equals so they can become women, and partners in constructing identity and language (1992, p. 82). This proposal has been met with resistance; by men, who do not want to lose the privilege to represent the ideal of the human genre; by women, who are not used to defining themselves as women and are afraid of their own nature (p. 110). Yet for Irigaray, women must take this step of reclaiming their biological identity to construct a social identity that truly reflects the differential relational identity that biology engenders: a feminine identity, 'received from birth' yet to be 'constructed culturally' (Lotringer and Irigaray, 2000, p. 115).

1.3.3.3. An 'ethic of the couple'

If healthy generic identity can only be constructed intersubjectively, it follows that both definitions of masculinity and family relations have been warped by the Logic of the Same. The feminine is not known, but neither is the masculine, as *different from*. Both men and women need to return to their biological identity and seek to 'become' who they were born as, to build a social and cultural identity commensurate with their being men and women, different from each other yet belonging together (1992, p. 54). One can only *prompt* men to do so, however, not speak for them.

Irigaray further argues that if men and women lack a generic identity proper to them, then there is no space for an ethic of the couple (1987a, p. 146). She attributes this lack to the division between public and private, between culture and nature, between the man-son and the man-citizen. The couple, loosely taken as the place where difference is embodied, is a way to enable those two halves of the world to meet: 'Entre la moralité d'un individu aliéné dans la famille et la *sittlichkheit* d'un peuple, il manqué l'éthique d'un couple: lieu et lien en perpétuel devenir entre les deux moitiés du monde naturel et spirituel' (p. 146).

Irigaray's argument relies on close analysis of Hegel (1992). Traditionally, women ensure the smooth running of domesticity to release men to be civic persons. Men, on the other hand, lose their domesticity so they can represent 'man' to the city. As a result, their return to domesticity is merely a return to nature, to what they need for survival, rather than a spiritual act. There is no 'two' in the couple: no two civic persons, no two domestic persons, no two persons. Only two halves, divided along the rupture between domesticity and the life of the city. Both women and men are deprived of an integrated relationship between the two (1992, pp. 45-46). Because woman has little, if any, public life, or access to *public* spiritual/cultural production, the products of male intelligence are turned into authoritarian discourse (1999a, p. 94). Men become spiritual fathers, women, natural mothers. Men become their mothers' spiritual fathers. A genealogic disjunction is introduced so that the two sexes can never communicate as adults, nor indeed, marry each other as such.

As an alternative, Irigaray contends that relations between individual men and women should be a microcosm of the appropriate embodiment of both man and woman, and the relationship between them (1992, p. 55). Sexual desire should not be reduced to reproduction, or the acquisition of familial goods, or serving a community. Instead, attraction between two Others should be creative at all levels, rather than primarily procreative (1990a, p. 13). In her later work, Irigaray widens her thinking beyond the confines of the couple, and argues for the importance of the brother/sister pair as a locus of *sexuate* difference that cannot be collapsed into the *sexual* or the mother/father dyad (2013, p. 132), then for re-thinking relationships between men and women outside of the family so as to redefine civic relationships unconstrained by 'the uncultured of sexuality and the various forms of oppression and slavery that result from it' (Lotringer and Irigaray, 2000, p. 58).

1.3.3.4. Etre deux: a triple dialectic

Irigaray's later work develops her constructive proposals for appropriate relationships with difference. The mainlines of her arguments have already been mentioned: reflection on the irreducibility of the Other; the need to communicate in ways that respect the Other's mystery and alterity; listening as if the Other is unknown, yet to be revealed; the need for silence as the canvas on which the Other can be given space to become (1992, pp. 170ff). This would lead to a transformation of relationships between subjects:

> L'interdépendance entre les sujets ne se réduit plus à la question de la possession, de l'échange ou du partage de l'objet, de la monnaie, d'un sens déjà existant. Elle se règle plutôt sur la constitution de la subjectivité... [les sujets] s'engagent dans un rapport dont ils sortent modifiés, l'objectif étant qu'ils accomplissent leur subjectivité tout en étant fidèles à leur nature. (p. 196)

Irigaray's thought has evolved considerably, as she herself acknowledges. In *Speculum*, she argued for the recovery of a double dialectic, male and female (1974). In later work, she argues for a triple dialectic: male, female, and the relationship between them (1998). This notion of a third space, between individuals, within which they meet and create something else, and out of which they emerge changed, is crucial to her later thought, and relies on appropriate mediations. To identify with one's own gender, one needs to enter the world of mediations, because, by definition, recognising my own implies recognising the Other. The very fact of accepting oneself as part of a genre creates boundaries to one's identity, desires and wants, boundaries that become truly known through relationship with the Other (1992). These mediations are marked by openness: the world is not tied ('bouclé'), language not fixed. Hearing the Other demands that the future not be bound by the past, though it is shaped in continuity with it. This will involve a re-education to perceive one another, relinquishing some of our immediate sensoriality (knowing who perceives and who is perceived) and remaining within the intentionality of safeguarding the subjectivity of both (1997).

Irigaray's challenge therefore is to collapse the old categories of thought drawn along the lines of subject and object, and come to a more sophisticated approach to the Other, which allows for generic identity, yet does not trap this identity into fixed models; it requires a different approach to knowing and being known, within which the enquiring subject is no longer master of the process. From this new epistemology derives a new

hermeneutic, one of all-encompassing dialogue, a dialogue that involves deconstruction and retrieval, and a careful listening to one's own self, a mapping out of the different connections that shape both subjects in relation to one another and to the vast web of relationships across space and time that have shaped their identity and subjectivity.

Irigaray therefore offers a very different approach to otherness; instead of starting with a definition of otherness and an ethical exploration of issues then applied to specific themes or situation, she offers a process for deconstructing unhelpful approaches, and for re-engaging with the Other. Out of this engagement, the real Other, rather than a theoretical concept of the Other, can emerge. Her proposals are controversial as well as subtle, and have not always been well-received (e.g. Allwood, 1998; Butler,1994; Burke, 1981). Nor have they always been used in ways that are consistent with her overall trajectory. Having explored the different aspects of Irigaray's work, the next chapter will turn to an examination of how Irigaray has been used in literary and Biblical criticism, and explore in more specific detail what an 'Irigarayan approach' may look like when applied to the text of Judges.

Chapter 2.

Towards an Irigarayan Method

Chapter 1 explored Irigaray on her own terms, as a philosopher, psychoanalyst and linguist. In this chapter, I will examine Irigaray's methodology in greater detail to define some principles to guide my own analysis. In doing so, I will explore how she has been understood by critics, and used by Biblical scholars.

2.1. Irigaray in secondary literature

2.1.1 Main friends and critics

2.1.1.1. General overview

Irigaray's work spans a wide range of topics and disciplines. Secondary literature however has been selective in its engagement with Irigaray, with great variations across disciplines. The vast majority of secondary works concentrate on her engagement with philosophy (Burke, 1981, 1994b; Butler, 1994; Deutscher, 1994, 2002; Stone, 2006; Whitford, 1991, 2007), mostly her earlier work, and largely from a feminist standpoint. These critics evaluate Irigaray's position within feminism, her deconstruction of Western philosophical models and her work on the Divine. A small but significant body of literature uses Irigaray's aesthetics as a basis for art analysis (Miller, 2011), drawing on her work on paintings, buildings and graphics (Irigaray, 2008a). Theologians have concentrated on her philosophy and its ramifications for understanding the Trinity and the nature of God (Daggers, 1997; Hollywood, 1998; Martin, 2000; Mulder, 2002; Priest, 2003; Sharp, 2002). Biblical scholars have mostly drawn on psychoanalysis and deconstruction (see 2.3). Scant secondary literature considers her use of linguistics or her later work. A shift in secondary literature did occur in the late 90s, away from debates on essentialism, and towards her attempt to 'expose philosophy's modes of representation and symbolic structures' (Stone, 2006, p. 25).

The history of reception is marked by struggles in placing Irigaray within wider paradigms. Is she a feminist? A *French* feminist, with Kristeva and Cixous? An essentialist? Does she promote *écriture feminine*? Is she a post-structuralist? More recently, following Whitford's landmark work (1991), secondary literature has been less polemical, and asked, 'what is it that Irigaray makes it possible for us to think?' (Whitford, 1991, p. 4).

2.1.1.2. Debated issues

Irigaray has always courted controversy. *Speculum* led to her expulsion from the Lacanian school, possibly because she refused to acknowledge Lacan in *Speculum*, despite the fact he was a major dialogue partner, in an ironic mimetic absence which mirrors his theory that women are erased from discourse to make self-definition possible through the Name-of-the-Father (Jones, 2011, p. 144). A cornerstone of her philosophy is her emphasis on the 'Real', which earns her criticism for being naïve, or falling into an easy link with referentiality (Stone, 2006, p. 24). This is a misreading of Irigaray's work; she spends much time reflecting on mediation and symbolisation, but accuses her critics of ignoring the real, the sensible, nature, and replicating the traditional Western nature/nurture, body/mind dualities. Her refusal to fully subscribe to post-structuralist approaches to language and texts mark her out as different to Derrida and other post-modern philosophers, despite her skilful use of deconstruction (2.3), though some have described her work as post-structuralist, postmodern or typically deconstructionist (Koosed, 2008).

Irigaray's most vocal critics have been other feminist theorists. She is often accused of being too theoretical because of her focus on mythical and philosophical discourse, and of disregarding women's history (Martin, 2000, p. 67). The accusation ignores her later work, which focuses on sexuated rights, in terms of women's bodily integrity and their representations in public places (1.2.3.2). Allwood (1998, p. 75) contends that focusing on the social and semiotic constructions of bodies does not help understand or respond to real, practical violence as this does not happen at the level of discourse. Irigaray however argues that language and discourse create the very conditions that make violence thinkable, allowable and excusable. Allwood's criticism introduces a dichotomy between body and mind, theory and practice, small picture and big picture. Irigaray argues that those aspects are indissolubly linked, and that Woman only exists in real, instantiated women, with real bodies. Furthermore, Irigaray's insistence on understanding the psychological mechanisms that lead to the legitimation of violence and violation of bodily integrity are central to her work on the Other of the Same, and will provide a helpful framework to understand violence in Judges 19-21.

Burke (1981, p. 295) accuses Irigaray of reversing oppression and writing out the male to favour the female. The allegation is difficult to substantiate given Irigaray's insistence on the risks of reversing the polarity of the logic of the same without exposing its roots. Irigaray's later work concentrates specifically on the conditions needed for multiple Other

subjectivities to emerge together (1.3.3.4). Burke, with others, struggles with the different, continental philosophy that Irigaray represents. She fails to understand basic distinctions: she translates *parler femme* as 'female writing', then interchangeably with 'speaking woman'. This is a consistent trend in secondary work, which bypasses Irigaray's very specific and differentiated approach to discourse and written work, enunciation and linguistics.

Others object to her focus on sexual difference as primary, and the risk of ignoring other differences and how women are situated within complex, multiple strands of identity and oppression (Butler, 1994, pp. 141-173), a more difficult argument to rebut. Irigaray herself pays attention to the problem in later work (1994a; 1998; 1999a) and argues that constructive expressions of sexual difference can form a paradigm for living creatively with other differences. Whilst she narrowly focuses on sexual difference, her theories can be widened, as she suggests, to include other differences, something I will do in Chapter 5.

Interestingly, most of these objections to Irigaray's work concentrate on her earlier writings. Equally, most of those who attempt to parallel her approach tend to turn to deconstruction and *mimesis*, the methodology of *Speculum*, but ignore her later forays into political theory, linguistics and attempts at reconstruction.

2.1.1.3. Lost in translation

I now return to the difficulty of translating Irigaray, not just in terms of words, but of cultural contexts. Irigaray stands within continental philosophy and its expressions of feminism, often misunderstood and consequently misrepresented by Anglo-Saxon feminists who work out of 'an intellectual climate dominated by empiricism, pragmatism, ordinary language philosophy' (Martin, 2000, p. 9).

An indicator of these misunderstandings is the translation of Irigaray's opening gambit, *Speculum*. The translation 'Speculum of the other woman' is flawed at a number of levels. The full stop after 'Speculum' was omitted, and Other translated as an adjective rather than a noun. Irigaray's (1992, pp. 102-103) intention with the title was to bring out the relationship between a woman and herself (as she looks into a mirror), and consider how to constitute the world of the Other as woman. The word speculum was intended to critique the Western subject's dependence on the logic of the Same, but also to highlight how all 'looking' happens through language and discourse, and therefore necessitates a

speculum rather than a simple mirror. This is far from the common Anglo-Saxon translations that imply a relationship between two women (Martin, 2000, p. 37).

Irigaray's use of words makes translation problematic. She creates meaning not just through *what* she says, but *how* she says it, and cannot be translated faithfully. Anglo-Saxon feminists have tended to prize intelligibility as key, charting a course between naming a problem and its cause, and refuting highly academic language as inaccessible (Burke, 1994, p. 251). They have criticised Irigaray as hermetic, difficult, and too detached from 'real struggles' (Weed, 1994, p. 84). But as Weed argues, 'for Irigaray, however, the intelligible is more often than not the problem, the lure that keeps one from reading the workings of the political system' (p. 84).

The cause/effect relationship is another source of tension. In Anglo-Saxon feminism, debates centre around cause and effect models to explain women's oppression. Those models necessitate mutual exclusion between cause and effect: if the effect participates in the cause in any way, the model breaks down. As Irigaray uses both structuralism and psychoanalysis, her approach is more subtle and complex, and she considers how all actors are both caught within the mesh of social constructs they belong to and enacting their own choices. Irigaray's approach will enable us to consider each participant in Judges 19-21 as a moral subject, not fully determined, yet not fully free.

2.1.2. The essentialism debate

2.1.2.1. The accusation of essentialism

Due to her work on female subjectivity, Irigaray has long faced accusations of essentialism over aspects of her thought: her emphasis on the body and maternity, something feminists have wanted to distance themselves from; her celebration of fluidity and multiplicity in female sexual imagery, reminiscent of old stereotypes of feminine excess (Jones, 2011, p. 166); her insistence on a 'horizon of being' for women, because it risks alienating women outside the 'norm'. The debate is not confined to Anglo-Saxon feminism. The Lacanian School has also argued that Irigaray is too literal in her use of the body as defining gender, and fails to recognise that language is constitutive as well as referential, with no feminine space that can be returned to outside the structures of language (Martin, 2000, p. 23).

The accusation often rests on definitions of feminism that downplay sexual difference, emphasise gender construction, and relies on dichotomies: sex/gender, biology/society, nature/culture (Chanter, 1995, p. 4). Irigaray consistently challenges the simplicity of the

nature/culture and biology/history splits in formulating the sex/gender distinction, as a manifestation of the Western logic of the same, which has led to patriarchy, the alienation of body and soul, of nature and culture, and the whole system of hierarchies that rests on the split. In other words, essentialism itself is a natural product of phallocentric thinking.

2.1.2.2. Answering the critics

Problems with the charge start with the usual definition of essence as something necessary and unchanging about a thing/person. This is difficult to apply to Irigaray, given her insistence that identity is never a given, static, something that exists outside of social relationships that continually shape and influence it (1.2.2.2). Furthermore, essentialism itself is not a monolithic concept, but comes in various guises (Schor, 1994, p. 43). Some see Irigaray's essentialism as strategic, a necessary stage on 'the way towards the symbolic re-inscription of women into the economy of meaning' (Jones, 2011, p. 170). Whitford (1991, p. 71) argues that the journey back through essentialism is part of Irigaray's mimetic strategy and enables her to uncover unconscious assumptions and structures of thought and discourse.

Understanding Irigaray within the trajectory of her entire work is important. What she is striving for is to establish 'a female subject position which different women can inhabit in different ways' (Jones, 2011, p. 166). This subject position, in her later work, is not one that mirrors the phallocentric, self-sufficient One, but rather a constantly evolving space arrived at through dialogue with the Other, within a relational weaving of time, culture, place and all other factors of social identity.

2.1.2.3. Sex vs *gender*

Speaking about difference is actually difficult if we maintain a rigid distinction between sex and gender. This is a particular problem in English, because there is no way to translate the inclusive word *sexe*. *Sexe*, in French, can refer to gender or biology or both: Irigaray works in a language that assumes continuity and relationship between the two concepts. The distinction between sex and gender paradoxically became axiomatic with de Beauvoir's famous 'one is not born a woman, one becomes one'. Her aphorism underlies much Anglo-Saxon feminism. This approach is problematic, because it replicates the nature/culture dichotomy of Western culture. The body is turned into a product (of biological and cultural forces), reduced to the status of 'object of knowledge' (Salomonsen, 2003, p. 106). Irigaray seeks to go beyond this definition with the notion of sexuate identity, recognising that nature is not fixed and untheorized, but rather

processual. Irigaray attempts to speak from a place *outside* of the debate on essentialism. Goux (1994) terms Irigaray's position 'differentialism' (p. 181): while the dimorphism given by nature remains and cannot be ignored without devaluing and objectifying the body, this does not have to prescribe in advance what the feminine and masculine might become in history and culture; this difference is open to being constantly restructured and needs carefully cultivating so that totalitarian essentialism is avoided.

The essentialism debate hinges on the question: are women like-men or not-men? Irigaray argues this is a very poor choice. Why should there be either difference or sameness, equality or difference? Irigaray reconceives both. She cannot speak of a fixed female identity, because she argues that it has been impossible for women to be constituted as subject. She speaks of what is not. What needs protecting is not a fixed difference between set identities, but the conditions needed for difference to emerge. Irigaray *anticipates* difference (Deutscher, 2002, p. 50). Calling Irigaray 'essentialist' fundamentally misunderstands the nature of what she is trying to do, while relying on concepts derived from a form of feminism foreign to Irigaray's thought. My analysis of Judges 19-21 will therefore reflect her concept of identity as constructed, fluid, and relational.

This rapid tour of criticism on Irigaray reveals an obvious bias towards her early work. Few critics have considered her overall philosophy, with its evolution and breadth of disciplines. Yet reading the whole of Irigaray is integral to understanding her potential contribution to other disciplines, and in defining the shape of an Irigarayan approach within Biblical studies.

2.2. Method in Irigaray

To define the shape of an Irigarayan reading, we need to consider Irigaray's own methodology, in particularly in her analysis of texts, rather than her constructive proposals. This is a start only, because her interaction with texts reflects mostly her deconstructive agenda. Many Irigarayan readings only pick up on this one aspect of Irigaray's thought. Here, I concentrate on her approach to narrative, as this will illuminate a reading of Judges 19-21 more clearly. Two narratives stand out in the Irigarayan corpus.

2.2.1. Irigaray's analyses

2.2.1.1. Plato's Cave

Speculum unravels the history of Western philosophy, backwards, back to Plato and his analogy of the Cave. The approach is a clue: deconstructing layers of interpretation is necessary to uncover foundations. Going straight for the 'origin' is not always be the best path. Methodologically, in coming to a text, interpreters need an awareness of the layers that have been added through history and culture. In Judges 19, for instance, a whole range of interpretations have accrued around the character of the concubine. Was she unfaithful? Why did she leave? Various interpretations have shaped how we read the text, its translation and choices of textual variants (see 4.1.3).

Irigaray (1974, p. 310ff) uses classic devices of literary analysis: examining the role of the narrator and different levels of discourse, the relative position of different characters (the philosopher as guarantor of truth and stage manager, for instance) and their positioning in space and time, the overall shape of the text (a chiastic structure, with the reversal of the cave into the entrance into the Ideal of Forms). In line with Derrida and other deconstructionists, she scrutinises binary pairs (good and bad, better and worse, one and multiple), and looks for the cracks, the spaces between, passages and transitions that point to something different and a forgotten relation of origin. Finally, she conducts a careful discourse analysis, considering silence and the balance of who speaks and who does not, the role of speech in specularising time and the position of the speaker in relation to interlocutors, to the material world, and to speech itself. An Irigarayan approach therefore demands careful attention to the mechanics of a text, something I will fully apply in Chapter 4.

2.2.1.2. Antigone

The recurring figure of Antigone is as significant to Irigaray's later work as Plato's Cave to her earlier work. Her treatment of Antigone is more revealing, because she effects both a deconstructive and reconstructive gesture towards the story. As with Plato, Irigaray strives to understand the underlying structures of thought that give rise to the story. In *Etre Deux* (1997), she analyses Hegel's reading of the myth, rather than conduct a direct analysis of Sophocles' play. As such, she focuses on the public/private dichotomy, the dynamics of power and the impossibility for women to speak from a place of their own even as they try to rebel against patriarchal culture. She sets Hegel and Lacan's use of Antigone side-by-side so they reveal each other's weaknesses, without cancelling out each

other's insights (Jones, 2011, p. 206). This approach listens to text and critic together, without taking the interpreter's word as final. In the same way, setting Irigaray side-by-side with Judges 19-21 can illuminate the text, but Irigaray's own methodology cannot be allowed to swallow or contain the text.

In her later analyses, Irigaray (1998; 2013) pays closer attention to discourse and the relation between power and speech in instituting social order. Then she moves to exploring Other discourses and how they relate to the constitution of a concrete identity. In an interesting aside, Irigaray comments on Antigone's value as a myth or foundational story, as an example of how social norms are constituted and reinforced. She treats Antigone differently from Plato's Cave, because the two are examples of different kinds of discourse, used in different ways, with different outcomes. Reflecting on the nature of a text, and for us, on Judges as Scripture as well as the specific genre of 19-21, will be an important part of analysis (4.1.1).

2.2.1.3. Art

My third strand of Irigaray's own analyses may appear surprising: it is her approach to visual art. Irigaray has written widely as an art critique and on aesthetics, though usually in short, often unnoticed contributions to other projects. I will concentrate here on her work on Béguine nuns' paintings in 'La Voie du Féminin' (1994b) as it is typical of her approach and illuminates her thoughts on authorship. Irigaray here focuses on an artist's intention, on their imagination, and how we can disentangle what comes from the artist themselves and what comes from their social setting. In a throwaway comment, she argues: 'Au niveau du texte, les choses sont souvent plus simples à déchiffrer' (p. 155). Irigaray does not see a text, or a painting, as a blank page onto which a reader/viewer places their meaning. While the viewer's gaze is always important, and forms part of her analyses, she acknowledges authorial presence and intention, and the importance of looking for them, as well as understanding the wider social setting behind their work. She recognises some form of reality behind a text, which marks her out as different from radical post-structuralists. As such, an Irigarayan analysis will be boundaried by the text itself as an external reality, and demand attention to questions of history, narration and authorship (see Chapter 4).

In her approach to these paintings, Irigaray carefully navigates between suggested explanations and possible contextual factors, never imposing but alluding to different possibilities. This is a better place to understand her initial approach to texts and the work

of others. Her more philosophical work takes for granted the kind of deep analysis that undergirds her constructive proposals. Here Irigaray openly analyses human subjectivity within its historical context. Arens (1998) argues that this offers a model for

> the analysis of how communities form and reform; how they express their own purposes through practices (gestural, visual, or verbal); and how individuals inhabit the spaces of these communities to create or recreate their subjectivity, to reposition themselves as individuals within the power grids they belong to, set out in that discourse but realized only in and through their own acts. (p. 43)

A truly Irigarayan approach therefore opens up a space beyond the text to consider the nature and significance of a text for its community of origin, as a legitimate part of analysing its significance through history, and its relationship to modern-day readers.

2.2.1.4. On her own method

Irigaray has not left it to critics to discern her methodology. She says she uses discourse analysis, putting things in historical perspectives and inversion/*mimesis* (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000, p. 155). By inversion, she means inverting herself, consciously taking the position of the Other so as to see the world as an outsider would. Furthermore, she argues for a creative dialectical method that opens 'a path which permits dialogue between subjects in respect of singularities' (*Ibid*.). In particular, all analysis and interaction must be seen in dialectical relation with history and future, remain faithful to experience, and have rigor in their phenomenological elaboration. Irigaray offers a structured, boundaried framework within which to approach texts and contexts, asking that the Other of text and history be allowed space to exist for who they are, rather than treated as an object of inquiry.

2.2.2. The starting place: situatedness

Irigaray's thoughts on a dialectic with past and future opens the way to her thinking on situatedness. Her (postmodern) starting point is that no reading is value or perspective-free; readers must always be aware of their position in time, space and culture, and how it shapes their reading. Irigaray then goes further and argues that subjects themselves are formed by their interaction with objects of study and other subjects.

Irigaray does not restrict her argument to readers, but argues that texts, stories, myths, and all Others are situated, and their situatedness needs to be acknowledged and listened to (1984, p. 15; 1997, p. 153ff). A true Irigarayan analysis therefore creates a space between reader and text, where the situatedness of both is acknowledged and neither

horizon collapses into the other. Historical, anthropological, textual and cultural questions therefore all matter. Situating the text, whilst being aware that this very act of situating is shaped by the readers' own position, is an important step towards achieving a listening space where interpretation can happen (see 4.2).

Irigaray (1997, p. 153) makes a particularly salient point for those seeking to conduct a feminist appraisal of historical texts and events, and cautions against uncritical use of words such as freedom, equality and patriarchy, without first interrogating the meaning of these words within the context of our time, and the very conditions that makes the existence and use of these words possible. Extending this to the study of Judges, it will be important not to read back possibilities for actions, words and writing that could not have occurred at the time.

2.2.3. Structuralism

2.2.3.1. Deconstruction

Irigaray positions herself quite clearly as a deconstructionist within her early work. She draws heavily on the methodology of others such as Derrida and Lacan, her (mostly unacknowledged) dialogue partners. She focuses on systems of binary oppositions that privilege one pole against the other: feminine/masculine, nature/culture, ideal/real, academy/politics, intellectual analysis/practical application, subject/object, matter/form… Following Derrida, she starts by privileging the weaker term in order to destabilise the hierarchy, and exposing the injustice underlying the system before finding terms that sit between the poles and explain how these poles have come into being (Whitford, 1991, p. 126). However, deconstruction itself can easily become the privileged term that forces other concepts to be evaluated by this external gaze.

Therefore, Irigaray (1999a, p. 13) is highly critical of deconstruction as an aim in itself and argues that deconstruction has been unable to conquer its own death drive, and turned into nihilistic, promethean folly. Derrida himself refused to acknowledge his complicity in the phallocentric economy; he claimed the enunciative position of women, as fluid and indeterminate, yet excluded women from it (Whitford, 1991, p. 127), illustrating how men construct their own identities, positions and arguments out of the substance of women. Deconstruction ultimately participates in the sacrificial matrix it exposes: even Derrida affirmed that the repression of difference is central to the very possibility of order (Caldwell, 2002, p. 23). Hence, deconstruction on its own does not enable women to move beyond the fragmentation they experience in the phallocentric economy. It reduces

the term 'woman' to nothing but a construct, and leaves no alternative enunciative position from which to speak as woman (Whitford, 1991, p. 123).

Irigaray instead attempts to conceive of a different type of symbolic order, where difference is recognised and subjects are interdependent rather than isolated units:

> She seeks a symbolic governed by more than one term and capable of acknowledging ambiguity, difference, and interdependence rather than submitting them to a hierarchy. She also seeks a form of subjectivity that would avoid projecting difference, ambiguity, and materiality onto others. (Caldwell, 2002, p. 23)

Irigaray does not simply destabilise or reverse binary pairs but enables them both to 'occupy a different position' (Burke, 1981, p. 295). She does not reject deconstruction, but argues it is only partial, it cannot do everything that needs to be done. One needs to come to a text or system, use deconstruction as an analytical tool to reveal its flaws, yet recognise the edifice and acknowledge those who constructed it (Irigaray, 2002, p. 5). This can only happen when we occupy appropriate subject positions that enable us to 'appreciate whatever is beautiful and true without the need to destroy' (p. 13).

Irigaray cannot be a post-structuralist or a deconstructionist because of her emphasis on matter/bodies/the Real: all is not language, all is not games. It would be difficult indeed to speak of anything that matters, such as bodily injury and the harm done to women, unless matter existed, and mattered in the first place. An Irigarayan approach to Judges will therefore follow Irigaray's trajectory: using deconstruction as a tool, or stage, but always one that is a precursor for rebuilding, and one that still acknowledges the value and potential of the text. The text of Judges 19-21 lends itself well to deconstruction as the plot of Judges 19 relies on the destabilisation of a whole series of binary terms, as we shall see in 4.3 and 4.4.

2.2.3.2 Recuperation and reconstruction

Going beyond deconstruction, Irigaray offers a framework for reconstruction and retrieval. Her overall purpose is to make it possible to think, speak and live sexuate difference. She argues that what is needed is a different horizon of thought rather than social critiques or street riots (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 10). Irigaray's twin approach to deconstruction and reconstruction yields a double movement with any text: she analyses 'textual instability and self-contradictory accounts of women, embodiment, nature and matter', at the same time as recuperating elements which have

> the potential to resist marginalisation, devaluation or dichotomisation of matter, embodiment, alterity and flesh. Both approaches – the deconstructive and the recuperative – presuppose, and read for, the presence of multiple and polyvalent textual elements. (Deutscher, 2002, p. 144)

Making a space for woman to speak can only happen by first understanding the places and contexts within which women cannot, and have not been able to, be. Recuperation involves listening to silences, and understanding what is meant to be forgotten. This involves a focus on 'forgotten passages' (Jones, 2011, p. 83), the forgotten transitions and spaces between: from womb to birth, from you to me etc. It means recovering and acknowledging the existence of female genealogies, of women in history who have made a mark, yet been forgotten (Irigaray, 1987a, p. 31). Irigaray does not argue that there have never been spaces for the voices of women to be heard. The lack of sexual difference is not monolithic (1994b). There is an ambiguous kind of sexedness in language, which appears in philosophical wonderings, thinkings of the Other, of passages and in-betweens (Deutscher, 2002, p. 113) that could, eventually, contribute to the formulation of true sexual difference.

Here some subtle distinctions are important. Irigaray cautions us about the difference between the unthinkable and the suppressed: the unthinkable cannot be read back into a text or situation (defining the unthinkable is part of understanding the situatedness of texts); the suppressed, on the other hand, is already present but inexpressible within current structures of power or knowledge (Irigaray, 1980, p. 120ff). Here lies the difference between Cixous and Irigaray. Cixous is looking for the repressed feminine, to try and allow it to speak (*écriture feminine*) whereas Irigaray seeks to make possible a hitherto impossible space for women to speak as women (*parler femme*).

Irigaray does engage in the reclamation of women's voices, as with Diotima (1984). Yet she warns against simply claiming this discourse as the lost feminine. While women have made a mark, their language is still prisoner to the wider symbolic and imaginative processes of a phallocentric culture. Therefore, reading culture and the logic that has prevented women from speaking both need to be transformed for women to speak as subjects, and for lost voices to be heard. Recuperation is not impossible, but it is complex and limited by situatedness. In listening to the text of Judges, the difference between the suppressed (such as the possibility of male rape) and the unthinkable (e.g. 'gender equality') will be crucial, and dictate how we understand the silences of the text (Chapter 5).

2.2.4. *Mimesis*

One of Irigaray's strategies to uncover the suppression of voices (not the voices themselves) is *mimesis*. She starts by mimicking the position of women within philosophy, speaking with the voice traditionally assigned to women. The mimicry becomes disruptive as it seeks to draw out blanks, ambiguities and inconsistencies within the main philosophical discourse. Butler (1994) sums up the approach beautifully:

> Irigaray's response to this exclusion of the feminine from the economy of representation is effectively to say, 'Fine, I don't want to be in your economy anyway, and I'll show what this unintelligible receptacle can do to your system; I will not be a poor copy in your system, but I will resemble you nevertheless by *miming* the textual passages through which you construct your system and showing that what cannot enter it is already inside it (as its necessary outside), and I will mime and repeat the gestures of your operation until this emergence of the outside within the system calls into question its systematic closure and its pretension to be self-grounding'. (p. 157)

This choice of approach derives partly from the recognition of the double-bind of women theorists. The context and language within which they are seeking new representations of women is deeply phallocentric; yet emptying the concept and image of woman makes it even more possible for her to be used as the unformed substance of male projection (Whitford, 1991, p. 71). Irigaray therefore seeks a different way: journeying back through male discourse to reveal what is covered and unacknowledged, to prepare the way for something new. Her technique allows her to explore the place that she, as a woman, has been assigned, yet not be limited by it or reduced to it (Irigaray, 1977, p. 74). Applied to the text of Judges, this will involve exploring what being the woman Other to man may be, what woman is not present in the text, and fissures in constructions of gender identity.

While *mimesis* has been used by others (Marx on Hegel, Nietzsche on Platonism), they inverse something external to themselves. Irigaray (1992, p. 107), in contrast, inverses herself, as woman. This shapes an approach to texts that requires inhabiting them, understanding them thoroughly, then, at times, using them against themselves to reveal disjunctions and ambiguities. Yet *mimesis* never stops with destabilisation:

> I have to effect a gesture which is at least double: deconstruct the basic elements of the culture which alienate me, and discover the symbolic norms which can at the same time preserve the singularity of my nature and allow me to elaborate its culture. (Irigaray & Lotringer, 2000, p.148)

2.2.5. Opening up a 'third space'

An underlying element of Irigaray's deconstructive and mimetic strategy is her transformation of dialectics. While arguing that dialectic is important, she transforms the approach to the negative. She attempts to redirect dialectic away from Hegel's movement towards a disembodied ideal that collapses both terms into the One (1992; 1994; 1999a; 2008a; 2013). Instead, the negative is used to preserve the irreducibility of the Other and reveal the limitations of the self. *Contra* Hegel's dialectic of master and slave, she advocates a dialectic that affirms the possibility of non-mastery (Joy, 2006, p. 96).

Irigaray (2008e) explains her vision of a constructive dialectic as not reducing thinking to 'going with or against' (p. 237), nor creating a synthesis of two beings and their thoughts, nor attempting a detached neutrality in overseeing a debate, but rather a movement that involves both participants in the dialogue and transcends them both. What is needed is the creation of a third space, one that exists between two:

> The two worlds do not have to confront each other in order to resolve, cancel or overcome their difference, but have to integrate into their ethical duties the task of forming a new world, taking into account the fecundity of their different belongings. (2013, p. 135)

Applying this logic to a Biblical text, good interpretation needs to occur within this third space, a space that takes the text, its culture, its author, its very fabric into account but does not seek to master it. Equally, interpretation cannot remain purely at the level of commenting on history, anthropology or textual matters (tools chosen by the interpreter, which influence what can be heard). Rather, there needs to be a creative dialogue between two worlds, a dialogue that must recognise the otherness of both participants. The interpreter's world and questions matter, so do readers' responses.

Irigaray's thoughts on history are helpful in illustrating this movement:

> It is not enough to remember; it is our duty to continue History and not only be repeating it. We have to build the present and the future while remaining faithful to the past and, once again from historical necessity, this past and this future must nowadays be shaped anew by men and women, working in a new way amongst themselves. (1994a, p. 41)

Kelso (2007, p. 69) argues this methodological approach derives from Irigaray's training as a psychoanalyst: in a dialogically open relationship, in attentive listening that enables silences to be heard, and heard differently, in the breaking down of past, present and future as different frameworks. Just as in psychoanalysis, Irigaray focuses on enunciation, on the present, lived encounter between two. The aim is not simply to understand the

past, whether to critique and assign responsibility, or to retrieve what can be retrieved, but to construct a different set of relationships between past, present and future (Kelso, 2007). In other words: Lire n'est jamais neutre.

2.2.6. Discourse analysis: a forgotten strand

'L'analyse du langage est un précieux moyen d'information, et de prévision' (Irigaray, 1985, p. 11). While Irigaray's philosophical methodology is crucial, it is puzzling that critics and would-be Irigarayan readings pay little attention to her use of discourse and language analysis, and her work on linguistics (1987b; 1990b; 1993; 1999b). Her close attention to words and texts derives directly from her focus on enunciation and the recognition of otherness through language. Following post-structuralist thought, Irigaray (1985, p. 186) stresses that all enunciation, all discourse is a complex choice between what is said and what is left unsaid, though none of these choices can be explained easily or linearly.

Her first port of call is to examine the construction of subjectivity through close analysis of pronouns and grammatical constructions, particularly in processes of self-representation. She questions how dialogue is structured, and whether it is a meeting of two subjectivities, whether one or both interlocutors fail to establish a 'you', 'speaking to the Other only in the mode of recall, recollection, adherence to or rejection of a pre-established pattern' (Deutscher, 2002, p. 25). Analysis of pronouns reveals the objectification of subjects, and subject perception in ocularisation through grammar (Irigaray, 1985). This enables readers/listeners to discern glimpses of the subject that unifies language. An analysis of pronouns is Judges 19-21 is highly revealing. So, for instance, who 'we' or 'the people' represent in 20-21 shifts with the narrative (4.3.2.6.): who is Israel? Who is included, and who is not? Pronouns in the text introduce interesting issues of self-differentiation and collective identity.

One of Irigaray's linguistic interests is the speaking subject's 'relation to the language within which they are already situated' (2002, p. 36). Her attention to different languages (1990b) highlights the importance of understanding those relationships within the original language, and the pitfalls of critiquing a text or speech from the conceptual basis of another linguistic framework. Irigaray argues there needs to be different levels of analysis to establish the relationship between speaking subject and speech. First is how the present communication is realised: not codes or grammar, but who are the speakers and who do they speak to. In Biblical Studies, this will need to happen at the level of the characters in the text, and at that of narrator and potential readers. Second will come a

consideration of how I/you/him/her/they are expressed within speech and what their relationships are with both speaking subject and the object(s) of the exchange. For Irigaray, this involves a consideration of the speaker/writer's relationship with the world they are seeking to name/relate to. Third, what type of transformations are effected by speech? Irigaray lists a number: interrogative (leaving responsibility with the Other); emphatic (appealing to the world as principal guarantor of the truth of speech); negative (when a subject distances themselves from their speech – *énoncé* – while still assuming it); passive. Irigaray's definitions are helpful, though we must note they do not neatly correlate with an analysis of verbal forms. Finally, Irigaray turns to the mode of relations established between enunciation and *énoncé*: direct or indirect speech, narration etc. Whilst I have enumerated those as an ordered list, the different modes of analyses do not proceed in order, all need to be considered as part of a process of 'coming and going' between the different poles and aspects of discourse (1987b, p. 15). Judges 19-21 offers a rich mix of direct speech, reported speech and narration for analysis (see 4.4).

While pronouns are a key focus, Irigaray does not forget other terms. Verbs, in particular, are key to understanding subject-object relationships and a subject's mode of relation to the world and others: 'the verb is the instrument of construction of the subject, of the world, of the relationship with the other' (2002, p. 60). Finally, Irigaray (1985, p. 182) considers substantives. Substantives can never have the precise nature of verbs, because they always suggest a multiplicity of potential relations, and necessitate interrogating their relationship to all other terms. Irigaray contends that with regards to meaning, 'the substantive in a way immobilises time. Time is imprisoned with the thing that the substantive designated in a supposedly immortal or eternal denomination' (2002, p. 62). Attention to both structural and hermeneutical aspects of speech is needed.

This summary of Irigaray's approach to language suggests that close textual analysis is an important feature of an Irigarayan reading. While she herself applies this type of analysis most often to enunciation, speech as it happens, we nonetheless see her use these techniques with texts, in her approach to Plato's *Cave* and *Antigone*.

2.2.7. Irigaray and the written word

The distinction between spoken and written word is important enough for Irigaray that she distances herself from her French feminist roots and focuses on *parler femme* rather than *écriture féminine* (1990a, p. 65ff). First, she seeks to make *parler femme* a possibility. Women are caught in a double bind: the language they are speaking negates the

feminine, yet trying to speak out against this negation involves their taking up a man's enunciative place. As Whitford (1991) points out, *écriture feminine* is about meta-language, which is

> incompatible with Irigaray's focus on enunciation. The moment of enunciation is directed towards an interlocutor; one cannot comment on one's position as enunciator whilst simultaneously occupying it. (p. 41)

As a result, Irigaray is reluctant to identify with *écriture feminine,* or to speak within a tradition of women's writing (D. Chisholm, 1994, p. 272). Furthermore, *parler femme* cannot be unmediated, but can only exist in a structural relation to what has been so far (Martin, 2000, p. 14), and in relation to a present symbolic order and dialectic between genres. As such, the feminine can never be simply written. Writing is not enough to change the world. Therefore, while Irigaray does pay a great deal of attention to the written word, it is always within the context of a word that was once enunciated and represents a dynamic and effective cultural and symbolic force.

In exploring reading and texts, Irigaray's (1985, p. 152) starting point is a sense of the lost contiguity between writer and reader since writing is mediated through tools (paper and ink). The lack of contiguity does not equate with an absence of relationship, but exacerbates the difficulty of hearing the Other. Irigaray does not argue that only text and reader are in relation, but maintains the place of the writer: 'in the book there always dwells an absolutely singular relation: the writer and the reader are both visible and invisible to one another' (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 138). The very act of writing transforms a text already, whilst reading involves a relation of appropriation that subverts it (Irigaray, 1985, p. 149). Hearing the Other through and in a text, is therefore an even more complex task than hearing the Other who speaks. Finding a 'third space' relies on the discipline of readers in allowing the text to create impressions that are consistent with it and in self-consciously acknowledging the foreign network of thoughts, symbols and concepts that they bring to the text (*ibid*.). Readers need to 'exceed appropriation' and maintain dialogue with a text (Tyson, 2013, p. 492).

Irigaray therefore differs markedly from other post-structuralists. For her, there could be no 'death of the author', because erasing the author means erasing origins and allowing speech to be appropriated by a new totalitarian consciousnesses. Furthermore, the death of the author would negate the fundamentally embodied nature of speech and writing. This reveals the drive of the phallocentric order to preserve its privilege through the non-

representability of the body (Beattie, 2002, p. 28ff). Erasing the body of the author erases their otherness, erases them as dialogue partner, and prepares the text to be appropriated by the reader, rather than entered in dialogue with.

No Irigarayan reading can be an exercise in pure reader-criticism. Irigaray insists that one must be 'faithful to the text' (1987a, p. 111). Irigaray's own readings can be confusing, because of her use of *mimesis*; but they are always based on a very deep understanding of the original text, and an attempt both to expose ambiguities, cracks and silences, and reclaim symbolism and ideas for reconstructive work. In this sense, her analyses refuse to remain in the realm of the text in and for itself yet also refuse to appropriate the text. An Irigarayan reading needs to happen in this third place of dialogue, pregnant with possibilities for a different future that changes both interlocutors while respecting the boundaries of their identity. This matters particularly with regards to sacred texts, whose reading must involve more than just reading, translating and explaining. Sacred texts are meant to change the world, and therefore reading them must have as a goal the foundation of a new ethic, appropriate to the context within which they are read (Irigaray, 1987a, p. 101).

Irigaray's approach is therefore both highly structured and highly creative. I will take her thoughts on the importance of texts and their origins into my analysis of Judges 19-21, and attempt Irigaray's operation of triple listening: to the text and its Other, to myself and my own situatedness, and to the world within which the text is read. The text as we have it today tells a story of gender-based-violence, of a world in which women are used within the construction of male private and public identity, an identity at times fragile, subject to renegotiation and full of contradictions (who is and is not truly a 'son of Israel'?). I read this text in the context of the early 21st century, at a time when civil wars are rife, with attendant tales of violence against women. The web of public, private and gender identities is configured differently, but both contexts pose salient questions of ethics. I come to the text as one who has been involved with issues of gender violence both professionally and personally: my starting point is therefore not neutral, but rather tinged with ethical assumptions of right and wrong, firm feminist commitments, and ideals of gender relations; my views are further shaped by my personal commitment to a story of redemption within which the Christian God acts for the good of his/her people. Laying these different worlds side-by-side, and examining them through the lens of Irigaray's work on gender difference, can hopefully yield a reading that illuminates both text and reading context, and create bridges between past, present and a better future.

2.3. Irigaray and Biblical Studies

2.3.1. Using Irigaray in Biblical Studies

I have so far outlined the methodology Irigaray herself follows, and suggested how it may be applied in the reading of Biblical texts. While no Irigarayan reading of the book of Judges has been published to date, there have been Irigarayan readings of other Biblical texts. This section will focus on these readings, and their underlying understanding of what constitutes an Irigarayan reading.

Irigaray is famous for her critique of Western philosophy, derived from Plato and the Greeks. This may apply to some of the New Testament, but the Old Testament is situated within a completely different system of thought. However, while Irigaray does concentrate on post-Socratic philosophy, she hints that this analysis is not exclusive to a Western context (1998; 1999a); rather, she argues that rationality, in patriarchal contexts, is always represented as male, and that the symbolic universe of patriarchal cultures privileges the male over the female. This may seem simplistic, but Irigaray contends that while theoretical constructions of the symbolic are complex and abstract, the underlying imaginary is much more simplified. As Whitford (1991) translates, 'it deals with the primitive material of existence: life and death, kin relationships, and the body… It is also passional through and through' (p. 60). Furthermore, Irigaray's observations on subjectivity offer tools for analysis not restricted to the post-Socratic, though this will be expressed differently in the symbolisation of different cultures.

Irigaray herself has turned to Biblical texts, as well as to non-Western cultures (1996; 1990b; 1999a). Unlike Derrida or Kristeva, she does not offer detailed readings of specific narratives, though she comments repeatedly on Genesis, Mary, the incarnation and the Eucharist (1980; 1984; 1985; 1987a; 1996; 2013). She uses religious narrative and its symbolism and often veers into the domain of theology, whilst never constructing a theology as such (Jaarsma, 2003, p. 45). For instance, she uses the vocabulary and traditional stories of sin and salvation to re-explore the problem of evil, and its incarnation within the Catholic tradition whose symbolism she considers her own (Irigaray, 1996). Her readings affirm the healing potential of sacred texts and the need to tell the stories again whilst being alert to misreadings, sin and the fact that those stories were told within specific contexts, by specific people, for specific purposes (Jaarsma, 2003, p. 46).

Irigaray's reflections on the Old Testament focus mostly on Genesis 1-3. She considers questions of origin, and the dynamic notion of woman being taken from a male envelope just as woman gives birth to man, in a divine act of balancing origin and interdependency (1984, p. 94); elsewhere she explores the man's recognition of himself in the woman, and his appropriation of the whole of what it is to be human through distancing himself from his Other (1985, p. 24). In *Marine Lover* (1980) and *Ethique de la difference sexuelle* (1984), she redefines what is meant by sin. She sees the real tragedy in disassociating human and divine life, and the man's identification with God as an ideal from which he is severed. Following the account of the Fall, man projects ideals onto God, and manufactures the divine as God the Father (Deutscher, 2002, p. 94).[4] Her work mostly engages with traditions of interpretation rather than with the texts themselves, such as the habit of representing femininity as temptation of the flesh, and a movement of drawing away from women as simultaneous to drawing nearer to God (Irigaray, 1991). Other forays into the Old Testament lead her to reflect on the character of Miriam, Moses' sister, as neither wife, nor mother, nor daughter, not explicitly a virgin, but a sister, a woman in her own right (1996, p. 11). This shows that she does not treat the Biblical record as monolithic, incarnating one view of gender, but considers each text separately, looking for the cracks in an overall patriarchal account.

With the New Testament, Irigaray (2008b, p. 103) concentrates overwhelmingly on the figure of Mary and the centrality of the concept of incarnation, using art and theological tradition rather than the textual analysis she conducts on Plato or Antigone. Interestingly, her starting point is not Mary as a symbolic figure, but the historical occurrence of Mary and Jesus. Her insistence that they must be understood first as historical events within their own context before symbolic readings can be effected gives us a precious clue for Biblical readings of other texts: the relation between text and event, between text and historical context matters. Having said this, Irigaray (1987a, p. 101) also says she does not want to be limited to old ways of listening to texts unless they contribute to building a different future. Her preoccupation with the new is not a wholesale discount of the old, but a concern that interpretation not be limited by a traditional patriarchal framework, asking how we can listen to these texts anew. The answer given through her work on other texts is, by recognising the history of interpretation, deconstructing it, and seeking

[4] Most of Irigaray's work takes an overtly Feurbachian approach, as she acknowledges in 'Divine Women' and 'La Croyance Même' (1987a). Her accusation of projecting masculinity onto the divine refers to oppressive totalitarian identity in need of control and validation, rather than the transcendent divine horizon of becoming she speaks of in later work.

to hear what the text can say and what can be retrieved. New interpretations are not all equal however, and Irigaray (1992, p. 191ff) does not shy away from critiquing feminist interpretations for failing to consider the mystery conveyed by the text and its symbols.

Irigaray focuses on the incarnation as a corrective to the Western philosophical tradition that has divorced human beings from bodily reality. She consistently argues that the God of Christian interpretation and tradition has over time become a projection of the Enlightenment male: self-generating, independent, self-contained and unaffected by humans (Jones, 2011, p. 107). She then analyses how these portrayals of God have reinforced the construction of male subjectivity. Her answer to the problem is to return to the incarnation and its mediation of word and flesh.

Irigaray's (1994c) most telling comments with respect to Biblical Studies appear in her evaluation of Fiorenza's work. Her strongest objections come in the realm of history, what can legitimately be derived from a text, and what we know of an ancient culture. She disagrees with Fiorenza's broad division between Greek-influenced Christianity and Jewish roots. She argues that those categories are too broad and do not represent the many variants and incarnations of these two cultures through time and space. She objects to the use of the term 'Judaeo-Christian'; first because events and their meaning differ in the two traditions, and because they work in different languages, which are not used uniformly over time. Finally, she points out that Judaism is attached to an entire people and therefore has a much more political focus than Christianity. Regarding the actual text, she disagrees with Fiorenza's idea that women are at the centre of Jesus' life; instead, she says Jesus/God was at the centre, and argues that Jesus was not simply a moral teacher but the bearer of salvation; she therefore places herself far closer to traditional Christian orthodoxy than some so-called Irigarayan readings would allow.

2.3.2. Irigarayan readings in Biblical Studies

Irigarayan readings in Biblical Studies largely mirror Irigaray's own interests, with a cluster of readings that draw on both her method and her work on Mary and Eve. Another set of readings focus on the Book of Revelation. This is perhaps not surprising given the highly symbolic and allusive nature of the book, and its striking use of female images. Readings of other books draw on methodology and philosophical concepts rather than Irigaray's religious views. Very few readings incorporate the three strands of methodology found in Irigaray herself, but pick specific aspects of her thought – usually from her earlier writings – and apply them to a text whilst ignoring the wider context and framework within which

Irigaray works. While there has been some interest in Irigaray from New Testament scholars, the majority of Irigarayan readings are to be found within Old Testament Studies, mostly from narrative texts, particularly Genesis 1-3. I will now evaluate key Irigarayan studies in Biblical Studies against the methodological principles set out in 2.2.

2.3.2.1. From deconstruction to retrieval

The vast majorities of Irigarayan readings draw on Irigaray's method of deconstruction, which is unsurprising given the wider cultural context of postmodernity and because, despite much newer writing, Irigaray has remained most famous for *Speculum*.

Sawyer (2008a; 2008b; 2005; 2002; 2001a) makes extensive use of Irigaray to deconstruct Biblical narratives and the place of women within them; as Irigaray does, she brings together the figures of Eve and Mary (2008a) and critiques the history of interpretation, from Augustine's focus on Eve as embodying original sin to patriarchal imaginings of Mary as the sinless virgin, predisposed to say yes, therefore not quite free. While Sawyer does pay attention to tradition, she ignores vast swathes of contemporary Biblical Studies, and fails to explore the progression of interpretation over time, which marks her approach as significantly different from Irigaray's retracing of the history of philosophy and its successive building blocks.

Beattie (2002) and Salomonsen (2003) follow Irigaray's deconstructive method more faithfully, in their analyses of the body in the Christian story and the search for a theological anthropology respectively. Both carefully deconstruct the story of interpretation before turning to texts themselves for retrieval and reconstruction. Beattie stands out in her attention to the concept of authorship and the distinction between text and interpretation while Salomonsen's consideration of cultural settings is faithful to the later Irigarayan concept of relational identity. Though their use of Irigaray is limited, it remains faithful to key principles. Their focus however is more on theology than textual analysis, which reflects the dominant trend in using Irigaray in Biblical studies: she is used for her philosophical ideas rather than for her methods. My study aims to depart from this trend and reflect both form and content.

Attention to the history of interpretation is the best-used aspect of Irigaray's deconstructive phase whilst other crucial aspects are disregarded. Few attend to cultural and historical situatedness; Durber (1992), for instance, in her study of parables, shows complete disregard for the cultural meaning and social position of shepherds despite their being important to her argument; Keller (2001) uses Irigaray as part of a larger piece on

postmodern readings, with little depth or overall methodology. Samuelsson (2012) offers a detailed reading of Revelation in what she calls Irigarayan fashion. She acknowledges the strength of feminist critiques of Revelation as misogynistic, but wants to do something different. She takes Irigaray's reflections on the era of the Spirit and the Bride (moving away from the spirit/matter dichotomy) and argues that Revelation can be read as moving away from phallocentrism into this new era. She states explicitly that she is 'not interested in a specific historical context' (p. 102). Her approach is highly symbolic, psychoanalytical, with no actual reading of the text, of intent, no exposing of gaps in logic or ambivalences, therefore a far cry from Irigaray's careful analyses.

This lack of attention to detail is fairly typical. Many 'Irigarayan analyses' use Irigaray's conclusions without going through the careful process needed to arrive to them; when methods are used, they are often partial and abstracted from Irigaray's overall thought. Sawyer's work (2008a; 2008b; 2007; 2002) is a case in point. She does pay attention to different relationships within stories and the configuration of speaking subjects, a cornerstone of Irigarayan analysis, in deconstructing patriarchal narratives. However, she does not examine the significance of gender terms, nor does she examine the possibility of spaces between, or the construction of subjectivity in relation to the Other, whether human or divine. Instead, she argues for the birth of an 'autonomous subject', a concept strikingly at odds with Irigaray's critique of post-Socratic philosophy. While Sawyer's attention to the divine-human relationship (2007; 2008b) reveals some interesting insights, she fails to attend to the dynamics of the text and the multiplicity of possible interpretations. Her starting position (that the God of Scripture is irredeemably patriarchal, that human beings can and should define themselves independently from the divine and do not need divine intervention) closes down avenues for interpretation, including the possibility of an intersubjective relationship between God and human beings. While she proposes some Irigarayan ideas, her conclusions do not rest on careful reading of text and context, and her deconstruction does not open up ambiguities or possibilities, but closes them down.

Kelso (2007) similarly uses a narrow range of deconstructive Irigarayan themes and methods in her work on Chronicles, though she pays better attention to text and context than Sawyer. She focuses on listening to the silences of male discourse to unearth underlying fantasies, as Irigaray does in *Speculum*. She argues that the silencing of women and their bodies (origin) is what enables a coherent construction of Israel's/man's identity as self-made and self-sustaining. She pays close attention to genealogies and how they

are presented by the narrator, with syntactic, textual and translational analysis, aspects often neglected by others. Her analysis of the text however is partial, focusing narrowly on a few passages, then drawing conclusions for the whole. She makes some strong parallels between collective and individual constructions of identity, but without exploring the links between them, a key aspect of Irigaray's later approach to philosophy and story (and incipient in her criticism of Descartes in *Speculum*), and one of the foci of my own study. Despite writing in 2007, she uses almost exclusively *Sexes et Parentés* and its work on genealogies and maternity. Overall, this is a disappointing reading, based on a partial use and understanding of the earlier Irigaray.

All these texts contribute to defining an Irigarayan approach to deconstruction, positively and negatively. True Irigarayan readings must take into account the whole of the Irigarayan corpus, as later concepts such as relational identity provide helpful keys and nuances; they need to pay close attention to situatedness; without it, the necessary analysis of evolution of interpretation over time and space is impossible, and the task of reading the 'unconscious' of a text and its interpretations risks failing to recognise the otherness of the text itself.

Irigaray firmly asserts that deconstruction cannot and should not be an end in itself (see 2.2.3); using Irigaray for deconstruction only would do violence to her principles and overall philosophy. It is therefore surprising that some authors who turn to Irigaray nevertheless dismiss the text of Scripture as irredeemably sexist, as Durber (1992) does, and, to a certain extent, Sawyer (2007; 2008b). Both slam the efforts of feminist critics; Durber critiques those who seek to retrieve parts of the Gospels, and points out that Jesus was by no means a feminist. This is undoubtedly true, though Irigaray would reply that the notion of feminism is anachronistic to the text of the Gospels, an unthinkable concept, and that the text cannot be critiqued for not doing what was not possible at the time. Sawyer (2007) takes issue with second-wave feminist scholars such as Trible and Fiorenza for creating a 'canon within the canon' (p. 5) along the theme of liberation, privileging 'good texts' (Ruth, Mary) and outlawing others (the household codes, Judges 19). Her general argument is that any counter-example in patriarchy ('good texts') is there simply to reinforce the supremacy of the male God (because even men are weak before him and women can be used to shame them). Instead, human beings are constructed as God's Other, and the God of the narrative is the ultimate, final patriarchal figure. Irigaray may not entirely disagree with the analysis, however there is little space made for retrieval or acknowledgement of the value of the original text, or of the ambiguities and variety in

characterisation of both God and humans, something I will explore thoroughly in Chapter 4.

In contrast, Jobling (2005) offers a creative take on Genesis 2-3. While the history of interpretation gives little hope, these stories cannot be dismissed due to their enduring power as foundational stories. Hence she takes up Irigaray's project to retrieve myths for the construction of the future. She reads Genesis 2-3 as a narrative that does not allow otherness to appear, as the woman is born off a man's envelope, and reabsorbed into his subjectivity ('bone of my bone'); the brief emergence of a female subjectivity in the garden leads to disaster and is quickly repressed. The episode could be interpreted as a typical repression of female origin and female desire portrayed as inadmissible. However, Jobling moves to argue that it is impossible to settle on just one interpretation and looks for gaps and ambiguities that show patriarchal ideology 'tying itself in knots' (p. 85). She then shifts into a Derridean argument on the permanent instability of texts, followed by a plea that hermeneutics of redemption and suspicion be kept together, rather than considered mutually exclusive. The subtlety and polyvalence of her interpretation is much more in line with key Irigarayan concepts and methods.

In a similar vein, DeVries offers some helpful Irigarayan readings of both Genesis (2008) and Luke-Acts (2012). He weaves together Irigarayan themes about wonder, subjectivity, freedom and choices, and pays close attention to the text. Unusually, he focuses on the more constructive aspects of Irigaray's thought on creating a space for true relating. He takes up key themes of insiders/outsiders, boundaries and margins, and an exploration of the liminal spaces where encounters happen. He also seeks to listen to gaps in the text that reveal the potential for something different and argues that Lydia (Acts 16.13) is unusual for being a host in her own right and therefore not the ground of male exchanges. This is faithful to Irigaray's view of the place of women in history as non-monolithic, evolving according to different forms and shapes of patriarchy throughout history. In his analysis of Genesis 2-3 (2008), he focuses on language, speech and desire in the configuration of otherness. He explores the man's cry of wonder when he first sees Eve and reflects on the tension between similarity and difference: enough similarity to make communication possible, enough difference to create wonder and desire. The lack in the first human was not remedied by the creation of another, identical creature, but by the gift of difference. From there on, there is a possibility to construct identity together, as human, without losing gender distinctiveness. While he acknowledges the significantly patriarchal nature of some of the language and the constraints of writers within the

original culture, he still argues that the notion of the divine as the instigator of difference is central to the text (2008, p. 63). De Vries conducts the kind of sensitive, detailed reading that I hope to conduct of Judges 19-21: with attention to language, form, interpersonal dynamics, without necessarily always agreeing with Irigaray's views on the Divine.

These two latter examples show that it is possible to draw on the entire Irigarayan corpus to analyse a text, and do so in the detailed manner that underlies much of Irigaray's own reflections on philosophy and foundational stories. The complexity and breadth of Irigaray's thought do not have to be a barrier to using her thoroughly.

2.3.2.2. Methodological foci

Because of this breadth and complexity, many would-be Irigarayan readings choose one methodological focus rather than bring together the three strands of philosophy, psychoanalysis and linguistics. While this may seem a sensible approach given the size and complexity of the Irigarayan corpus, it ignores the fact that the three strands are not independent but closely interrelated and dependent on one another. Forgetting linguistics often leads to a lack of attention to the detail of a text, to the complexity of interactions, and to the historical context of words and concepts used.

Irigaray's *mimesis*, in particular, is often imitated (e.g. Samuelsson, 2012; Sawyer, 2001b, 2005, 2007, 2008b). Sawyer's use of *mimesis* showcases how principles are lifted from Irigaray and applied elsewhere, not always in keeping with Irigaray's intention. This is particularly obvious in her treatment of Abraham (2001b; 2005). Her main argument centres on constructions of masculinity and what she sees as the impossibility for autonomy, maturity and self-identity because of the dictatorial Father-Son relationship that demands total obedience (2001b, p. 367). As noted above, this is a strange Irigarayan reading, given that Irigaray repeatedly attacks the notion of an autonomous, independent identity. Sawyer argues she uses *mimesis* to show that Abraham is a parody of masculinity, and that in the cracks, the possibility of a different, vulnerable masculinity emerges. Unlike Irigaray however she does not explore how male identity, like female identity, can only be constructed in dialogue with the Other. She claims to have applied *mimesis* in her reading, but this is unclear: who is carrying out the *mimesis*? Irigaray forcefully argues that she herself, as reader, is inversing herself and occupying the place assigned to *her* in texts speaking of women as a genre. Sawyer however argues that the

characters in the text itself are performing some sort of poor imitation of gender roles assigned to them, which she calls *mimesis*, clearly a very different approach.

A similar use of *mimesis* that locates it within the text rather than the reader is made by Ward (1995) with Genesis 2-3. He sets his study within the wider context of Genesis 1-3, and argues Genesis 2 is a story of differentiation, naming and desire. He reflects on how language changes from *mimesis* to self-representation, to patterns of good and bad *mimesis*. Differentiation then leads to desire and the destabilisation of the self as the self is never autonomous anymore. His focus on speech leads him to consider Adam's usurpation of speech and the role of speaker and namer after the fall. Adam's use of the name אדם for himself alone then creates a wedge with the divine speech that had called them both ה־אדם earlier, in a phallocentric pattern typical of patriarchal cultures. Overall, he offers a helpful analysis which draws together linguistics, attention to textual dynamics and key Irigarayan themes, though his use of *mimesis* clearly differs from Irigaray's.

Sherwood (1996) also appeals to reversal in her analysis of Hosea, in conjunction with a developed understanding and application of specularisation. She explores whether women in Hosea are a foil for the male construction of identity rather than subjects in their own right, then argues that the task of feminist criticism is to step through the looking glass (another Irigarayan metaphor) and invert the perspective, reading through Gomer's eyes. She makes salient comments about what 'reading with the grain' may be. When text and community of interpreters are androcentric, certain readings become the norm, the 'grain'. Readings that offer alternative interpretations are then categorised as 'against the grain', which implies that the original, androcentric reading was 'with the grain'. This leads back to some of Irigaray's questions about the gap between texts and interpretations, and the impossibility to speak (as) woman when the entire system of thought and speech is androcentric. While Sherwood's use of Irigaray is limited overall, she does showcase how to use reversal and perspective in a way much closer to Irigaray's. Thinking about the text of Judges, using *mimesis* will involve reading the text from the perspective of women and developing this perspective to understand the text and its dynamics and assess successive interpretations.

While *mimesis* has, overall, been poorly used in Irigarayan readings, a different technique prominent in Irigaray, dialogical reading, has been used more faithfully. McKinlay (2005) on Genesis and Mandolfo (2007) on Lamentations both take Irigaray as dialogue partner to listen to the text, in ways reminiscent of Irigaray's dialogues with Nietzsche (1980) or

with Hegel on Antigone (1997). McKinlay brings side-by-side the Sarah/Hagar narrative with Irigaray's *Passions Elémentaires* and her own context in postcolonial New Zealand, and lets the different voices illuminate one another. She focuses on submerged voices through the 'I' of *Passions Elémentaires* exploring the man's appropriation of the female 'I', the interplay of presence and absence, and the 'I' that remains despite attempts at suppression. This is a helpful example when we come to Judges 19-21 and explore the way in which the absent concubine drives the plot beyond her own disappearance from the narrative (see 4.4.3 and 5.1.4.1).

2.3.2.3. Reading through an Irigarayan thematic lens

While some scholars use Irigarayan method and themes, more have drawn solely on her themes and philosophical propositions. They offer a start point for reflection, but the lack of methodological rigour calls into question whether they perform 'Irigarayan readings'. Durber's (1992) reflections on intended readers and listeners, and the double exclusion of women, both within the text, and as potential readers are consistent with Irigaray's themes, but do not rest on an in-depth analysis of the text.

Readings of Revelation are particularly salient in this respect. Dellamora (2000) concentrates on Revelation 12, the woman in labour, and the figure of the whore of Babylon (Revelation 17-18). The main thrust of his argument is 'the complete erasure of women's history as goddesses, priestesses and sacred prostitutes' (p. 500). His article never attempts to dialogue with the text in any depth; it is an exposé of Irigarayan motifs, read back into Revelation. Samuelsson (2012) reads Revelation in highly symbolic, psychoanalytical fashion, with no actual reading of the text, of intent, no exposing of gaps in logic or ambivalences. Rather, she tells a different story from Revelation, recycling some of the symbolic language of the original, but without considering how the symbols made sense within the cultural setting that gave birth to them. Every woman, every body part, every place is allegorised. She uses Irigarayan concepts and imagery, and attempts a retrieval of story and concept, but this retrieval is not preceded by deconstruction and analysis, and shows little faithfulness to Irigaray's focus on situatedness and understanding symbolic systems.

Myers (2011) exemplifies a different use of Irigarayan themes in his reading of the Song of Songs. He focuses on the connection between gaze and speech. His attention to silence and what happens during and outside speech chimes in with Irigaray's interests, though he himself admits that much of what he surmises is not present in the text *per se* (p. 158).

Some of his language however directly contradicts Irigaray, speaking of consuming desire for the Other's alterity (p. 144), for instance (see Irigaray's arguments against Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Lévinas in *Etre Deux*).

Trying to read beyond the text is not inconsistent with Irigaray, but she relies on thorough analyses (whether we agree with her conclusions or not!). To effect a faithful Irigarayan reading of Judges, we need to grasp both Irigaray's arguments *and* her method, and how the two interact. Relying mostly on themes, as the writers above have done, risks doing violence to the text and its otherness.

2.3.2.4. Integrated readings

While many attempted Irigarayan readings fall short of the methodology I outlined in 2.1 and 2.2, there are helpful examples of thorough studies. Moore (2010) and Watson (2000) exemplify how to choose a specific angle for analysis whilst remaining faithful to context. Moore takes Irigaray's notion of *regard* (gaze) to examine ocularisation in the Gospel of Luke. His analysis rests on careful examination of textual dynamics while being written in witty, playful postmodern fashion. Watson attempts to come to a Pauline Sexual Ethic in *Agape, Eros, Gender* (2000). He analyses the Pauline corpus and how it relates back to Genesis, while asking questions of historical interpretation. He attends carefully to both text and tradition, while drawing on Irigaray's work on wonder and the necessary limitation of the self in relating to the Other.

Økland (2005a) stands out for her focus on linguistics in Revelation. She explores the importance of language as words, concepts and symbols shaped by history and geography, which cannot always be translated. She chooses Irigaray because of her attention to language in general, and to a text's original language's syntax before anything new can be elaborated. She analyses the gendering of place, the gender of characters, their bodies, virginity, and the philology behind the concept of virginity. The combination of careful attention to words, syntax and historical background with attention to gender issues, *mimesis* and the gaps in the text, makes this a comprehensive reading that reflects Irigaray's commitment to different disciplines. Her arguments about the culturally embedded nature of language are worth bearing in mind when coming to the text of Judges and issues of translation (see chapter 3). Økland does not limit herself to the earlier Irigaray. She argues that woman in Revelation has not emerged yet, because she is the material out of which man's symbolic order is constructed. Yet, through a limited use

of *mimesis*, she also seeks to identify the possibilities for *parler-femme* in the text, in a classic deconstruction-retrieval movement.

Good use of Irigaray however does not limit itself to Irigaray. Whilst some may have used concepts at odds with her philosophy, others, like Watson (2000), Beattie (2002) and de Vries (2008), interact with Irigaray, but push beyond her philosophy and acknowledge her limitations. Given Irigaray's sharp critical edge towards others, it seems essential to do so. Beattie (2002) critiques Irigaray for abstracting the stories and symbols of Christianity from their real life setting and communities of interpretation, applying Irigaray's own logic against herself, a criticism I fully share. Watson's use of Irigaray is not uniformly positive either in his search for a Pauline sexual ethic, and he parts company with her in finding that she only values one type of love – *eros* – and oversimplifies some key concepts, particularly that of God the Father, a reservation I share. This reading again brings elements of both Irigaray's deconstructive and constructive phases, while retaining a keen critical edge and distance. DeVries' critique of Irigaray's concept of divinity is most salient (2008). He rightly highlights Irigaray's tendency to define God as mere projection, after Feurbach. There is indeed little space within Irigaray's own writing for God as person, with his/her own subjectivity, an *Other* in his/her own right, which limits her analysis of religious texts, as she imposes her own understanding of the concept of God. The critique will be reflected in my analysis in 4.3.2.8.

Finally, Beal's reading of Esther (1997) stands out as the most comprehensive and faithful Irigarayan reading in Biblical Studies. He uses Cixous, Irigaray and Lévinas to analyse Esther, with a particular focus on the construction of 'us' versus the 'other' (Jews and women) and how ambiguities in gender and ethnic identities can become bearers of social transformation. His work is of particular interest to me given the similarity in focus, though his use of three philosophers, rather than just Irigaray, greatly widens the scope of his study. Methodologically, he starts by examining his own situatedness and otherness before the text, then alternates between critical theory chapters and Esther chapters. The effect is a dialogue, a setting side-by-side of theorists and the text at hand. The title, *The Book of Hiding*, reveals his interest in the unsaid, the silences that form the background necessary to discourse and identity formation. His attention to the text is detailed, with many of the elements highlighted in Section 2 of this chapter: lexical chains, specific word choices, time and space, passive/active, subject/object, as well as a thematic focus on seeing and the gaze of the One and the Other, and the liminal moments of appearing/disappearing.

Beal chooses to use Irigaray because she brings in a corrective to much feminist criticism and its overemphasis on the image of 'woman', as if there was a historical reality behind the term that was wilfully occluded by the text. Part of the problem is the assumption that Biblical stories are moral literature that provides models. This leads to gender being used as an interpretative key, rather than 'a problematic constellation of textual constructions' (p. 46); characters become two-dimensional, which prevents cracks in the text from appearing, the complexity of narration from being recognised and ambiguity from emerging. Instead, using Irigaray, Beal exposes constructions of identity and how fragile they are when they depend so deeply on one another. Beal was limited by writing pre-2000. Some of Irigaray's later work, particularly on temporal weaving and relational identity would have brought further theoretical depth to his analysis. Overall, this is the best, most comprehensive Irigarayan reading I have come across.

This brief look at Irigarayan readings in Biblical Studies reveals the tendency to use some of Irigaray's main themes and philosophy/theology as lenses through which to read a text, while ignoring her methodology, or the way in which her analyses rest on three equal methodological strands of philosophy, psychoanalysis and linguistics. *Mimesis* is often a focus, yet there is a degree of vagueness as to what Irigarayan *mimesis* actually is, or how it can be applied. Thematically, most readings focus on her earlier work, though some readings also conflate her deconstructive and constructive periods by attempting retrieval before texts have been fully read. As a result, there is much scope for using Irigaray more consistently and systematically, as I propose to do with Judges 19-21. The following section will suggest a scheme for reading that uses the full breadth of Irigaray's three-stranded methodology and spans her entire corpus, though still focusing specifically on the issue of otherness and the constitution of subjectivity when applied to men-women relationships.

2.4. Towards an Irigarayan approach to Judges 19-21

It is important to be clear at the outset on my own position and situatedness, and some principles of reading and language I will adopt. What emerges clearly from section 2 is that an Irigarayan reading will be multi-faceted and draw on a number of theoretical positions. Insights from historical-critical methods, from cultural studies, from literary analysis will all play a part in gaining a thorough understanding of the text and its situatedness, without any one approach claiming to be definitive or all-encompassing.

I come to the text as a 21st century, female reader with an agenda: I heard the text preached in such a destructive manner, it motivated the question for this entire thesis. Why is this in Scripture? What does it mean for this text to be in Scripture? Where is God in this text? What is its power for today? My work with victims of gender violence has sharpened my questions further. As a practising, Protestant Christian, I bring with me beliefs about the centrality of Scripture, about the nature of God as a positive, benevolent power, the weight of tradition and interpretations handed down through history, and the negative weight of tradition, with oppressive readings which have gone hand-in-hand with oppressive practices. Hence, for me, reading Judges 19-21 is not merely an intellectual exercise but a personal quest for meaning and discovery. As a (mostly) postmodern, feminist reader, I bring assumptions about what is right in terms of male-female relationship, about the nature of truth as multi-faceted, and the foundational nature of speech in shaping the world we perceive. As such, it is impossible for me to read the text as it would have been read when written; but careful analysis can help shape an understanding, however partial, of the boundaries set by the text's situation in time, space and culture. As a French feminist, I find myself far more at ease on the continental, difference side of the feminist spectrum, and may therefore be more sympathetic to some of Irigaray's more controversial arguments, because they chime in with the culture that has shaped my philosophical thinking. As a Christian feminist, I do not wish to dismiss the Christian God or the Christian Scriptures, but rather find a place for reasoned understanding within Biblical Studies.

I am looking for a third space for interpretation: a space where the text is not objectified, but allowed to speak in its otherness. Part of the journey is to recognise myself as Other to the text I am reading, as well as seeing the text as Other to me, and respecting its otherness, without trying to 'consume' it or bend it to my will. Such a process will allow for both a more traditional reading of the text and a reader-response analysis, but without polarising the two. The place of interest to me is where these two intersect, where, as Irigaray argues, meeting the Other involves both staying faithful to the self and the possibility of change, because a meeting between the One and the Other is the place where transformation can happen, where a shared movement can bring the past to bear on the present and imagine the future differently.

I now propose a grid for interpretation. The first column is a general methodological heading. The second unpacks some practical steps. These are not exhaustive under the heading, but rather represent the steps that Irigaray uses repeatedly and considers

essential. The third column cross-references methods against the key Irigarayan themes they can help us to explore. The fourth column identifies where these intersecting themes and methods will be explored in the rest of this study.

Methodological Angle	**Elements Irigaray pays particular attention to**	**Irigarayan themes**	**Application to Judges 19-21**
Understanding the nature of the text	• Questions of genre • Relationship of mythical/religious texts to communities of readers	• Power relations • Transformative potential • Issues in meta-fiction • The transcendental Other	4.1.1. 4.1.4.
Exploring context	• Historical and cultural questions that shape the text and establish boundaries to possible interpretations • Exploring how texts fit into their wider literary context • Intertextuality • Assessing women's voices within the constraints of their environment	• Situatedness • Relational identity • The shape of a patriarchal context	4.1.1. 4.1.2. 4.3.3.
Faithfulness to the text	• Textual matters (which text are we working from and why) • Translation	• Creating a third space	Chapter 3 4.3.2.3.
Literary analysis	• Dynamics and flow of the text, especially shifts and transitions • Narration and levels of discourse • Characterisation, in particular the relative position of different characters, who are the	• Power relations • Perception • Social organisation and cultural norms • *Etalonnage de la Vérité* • Representation of women	Chapter 4 5.2.1. 5.1.3.

Methodological Angle	Elements Irigaray pays particular attention to	Irigarayan themes	Application to Judges 19-21
	guarantors of knowledge, character positioning in space and time • Ocularisation (point of view and focalisation)		
Thematic analysis	Lexical chains and symbolism surrounding: • Public/private • The Other, the foreigner, the stranger • Gender • Origins and genealogies	• Constructions of gender • The Logic of the Same • Lost origins • Domesticity • Specularisation	4.2.2. 4.4. 5.1. 5.2.
Enunciation	• Choices of what is said/left unsaid (at levels of dialogue, narrator) • What type of transformations are effected by speech? • Relationship between enunciation and what is said: indirect speech, narration… • Silence • Role of speech in specularising time. Positioning speaker/ interlocutors/material world/speech itself • The nature of dialogue (as a meeting of subjectivities or	• The Logic of the Same • The constitution of subjectivity • Specularisation • The importance of silence	4.4. 5.1.

Methodological Angle	Elements Irigaray pays particular attention to	Irigarayan themes	Application to Judges 19-21
	return to previously established patterns)		
The role of speech	• Relationship between speech/myth and social order • The role of speech in self-representation • The role of speech in linking individual and collective identities	• Construction of self and Other • Semiotics • The role of religious texts	4.4.2. 4.1.4. 5.3.2.6. 5.3.4. 5.1.1.
Mimesis and inversion	• Taking the place of the Other set by the text to reveal the underlying logic of the system, both its failings and potential for recuperation	• The Logic of the Same • The possibility of sexual difference	4.3.2. 4.4. Chapter 5
Deconstruction	• Identifying binary pairs of different types (good/bad, opposites, better/worse, one/many) • Tracing what elements disrupts the binary logic within the text itself (textual instability and self-contradictory elements) • Privileging the weaker term in binary oppositions to destabilise hierarchies and expose the violence underlying the system • Creating a different space that does not reverse the	• The Logic of the Same • Specularisation	4.4. 5.1. 5.2.

Methodological Angle	Elements Irigaray pays particular attention to	Irigarayan themes	Application to Judges 19-21
	poles of the hierarchy, or institute deconstruction as the One principle ruling over all Others: enabling a multiplicity of interpretations		
Recuperation	• Identify elements with the power to resist a phallocentric narrative • Identify the traces of sexual difference expressed in ways possible within the context • Identify lost voices and gaps through which the Other appears	• Becoming woman and *parler femme* • The loss of origins	4.3.2. 4.4.3. 5.2. 5.3.2.
Psychoanalysis	• Pronouns as they reveal ocularisation through grammar (subject perception, self-representation) • I/you/him/her/they and how they are expressed, relationship between the speaking subject and the world they relate to, relation between speaker and the object of discourse • Verbs as the subject's mode of relating to Others • Human subjectivity in historical context: individual in society, within power	• The constitution of subjectivity • The Logic of the Same • The construction of gender and its consequences, violence in particular • Individual and collective identities, relational identity	4.2. 4.4. 5.2. 5.3.

Methodological Angle	Elements Irigaray pays particular attention to	Irigarayan themes	Application to Judges 19-21
	fields, through speech and action • Nature of subjects' relationship to the world they inhabit (including their own body)		
Listening to the history of a text	• Layers of interpretation, historical and cultural conditioning of readings • What has been constructed as 'the grain' of the text? • Exploring reader responses	• Situatedness and the constructed Other • Peeling back layers of interpretation	4.1.3. 4.2.
The writer/reader relationship	• Writer and reader as invisible yet present to each other • Relationship between writer and text, influence of the writer's social milieu. Authorial presence and intention • Wider social setting behind the work	• Situatedness • The bridge of the present that remembers	4.1.1.1. 4.2. 4.4.1. 5.3.4. 5.4.
Bridging text and life	• Faithfulness to experience • Rigour in phenomenological explanation • Exploring the impact of speech/text on matter and 'the Real'	• Nature of violence against women • Bodies and physicality	5.2. 5.3.
Creating a third space	• What future can be thought of in dialogue with the text?	• The possibility of intersubjectivity • Welcoming the Other	5.4.

Methodological Angle	Elements Irigaray pays particular attention to	Irigarayan themes	Application to Judges 19-21
	• How does dialogue with the text help us bridge past, present and future? • Where does interaction with this text take us in terms of thinking differently? • How does dialogue with the text reconfigure the situatedness of each partner?		

Chapter 3.
Translation and textual notes

This chapter will offer a translation of Judges 19-21 based on MT, with reference to LXX variants when appropriate. This is not intended as a reading translation, but rather as an aid to analysis. As such, it will pay attention to issues of relevance to an Irigarayan analysis: grammatical dynamics of gender and number; issues of self-representation through speech; narrative dynamics through repetition and leitmotifs; questions of power and status.

Chapter 20 and 21 show a degree of fluidity between 'Benjamin' and 'sons of Benjamin' across different versions and manuscripts, and between 'city' and 'cities'. As those variants are numerous yet do not appear to affect meaning, I will not comment on every separate variant in the footnotes, though discussion of tribal identity and its relationship to place will be discussed in 4.3.2.6.

Footnotes will only explore translation issues and textual variants of relevance to the thesis as a whole. For minor variants, or variants of less importance to this study, I will follow BHQ as a default position. One may note that chapter 19 generates more footnotes than the rest of the text. This is due to the fact that this chapter sets a lot of the motifs that are picked up subsequently; it also presents variants and translation problems of greater relevance to the thesis as a whole.

19.1 In those days, when there was no king in Israel, there was a Levite,[5] sojourning[6] in the far reaches of the hills of Ephraim. He took a concubine[7] from Bethlehem in Judah.

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[5] I have chosen to translate איש לוי as one word, a Levite, to preserve the symmetry between the two subjects: a Levite from Ephraim and a concubine from Bethlehem.

[6] The term, which denotes non-permanent dwelling, is significant within the discussion of otherness, belonging and boundaries.

[7] Various translations have been suggested for this, with different permutations of אשה and פלגש. However, it is used elsewhere as a compound phrase, אשה פילגש (2 Sam 15.16; 20.3), seemingly interchangeably with the simpler form; it is therefore reasonable to treat it in the same way as the more common אשה זונה, אשה חכמה or אשה מינקת (for further detail, see García Bachmann, 2013,

19.2 His concubine fornicated against him.[8] She went away from him to the house of her father, in Bethlehem in Judah, and stayed there for four whole months.

p. 28ff). There is no need to translate 'woman' or 'wife' separately. The word פילגש itself occurs comparatively rarely. The origin is uncertain, and the status of the women involved seems to vary. The English 'concubine' is unsatisfactory because of resonances of illegitimacy, however, it is the more commonly used term and recognised translation and I shall therefore use it here, though will keep the Hebrew form in analytical chapters. That concubines' rank was a legitimate one is shown in their inclusion in genealogies and inheritance issues (Genesis 25, 26; Judges 8), as well as, in this text, repeated mentions of a 'father-in-law'. The alternative, sometimes used, of 'secondary wife' is less satisfactory, because the word 'wife' has well-defined legal implications, whereas we do not know what the exact legal status of a פילגש was. In addition, there is no mention of any primary wives here. For an extensive debate of the status of פילגש, see Bal (1988a), García Bachmann (2013) and Hamley (forthcoming).

[8] There has been much debate as to the exact meaning of the verse, fuelled by differences between base texts. Both LXX^{A} and LXX^{B} differ from MT. While MT reads ותזנה עליו פלגשו, LXX^{B} has *ἐπορεύθη ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἡ παλλακὴ αὐτου* and LXX^{A} reads *ὠργίσθη αὐτῷ ἡ παλλακὴ*. MT is difficult because of an unusual construction: זנה על. While this is unusual, it is worth noting that זנה is followed by a variety of prepositions, including a parallel construction in Hosea 1.2 of זנה מעל, also introducing the offended party. LXX^{B} can be explained relatively easily as a corruption of *επορνευθη* through scribal error, which would then replicate MT. LXX^{A} is more difficult. The most common route between MT and LXX^{A} is argued to be a corruption of זנח. While on the surface, it makes for a plausible emendation - זנה is more common, and therefore a likely substitution, זנח offers a more straightforward reading of 'reject, spurn' which explains why the Levite seeks to retrieve his concubine, why her father had welcomed her back, and the apparent absence of punishment for a grave sexual offence. However, זנח is problematic. The verb is never translated in this way in LXX. While it appears 19 times in the Hebrew Bible, none of these appear within the Deuteronomistic History. Not only does it not appear collocated with על either, but it is never followed by a preposition at all. Discomfort with MT in large numbers of commentators, from early Jewish commentators onwards (Achkenasy, 1998; Block, 1999; Boling, 1975; Chisholm, 2013; Soggin, 1981) stems from contextual and narrative issues, and arguments of what is or is not likely, and difficulties with potential causal links between adultery and the subsequent rape. I see no compelling *textual* reason to emend MT, and have argued elsewhere (Hamley, 2015) that attempts to do so are attempts to reduce the concubine to a type character, a 'pure' victim, rather than a complex character within a tale of moral chaos.

'Fornicated' is old fashioned, but there are few suitable alternatives. 'Played the harlot/whored against' overstates the link with prostitution, a link not necessarily present in זנה (Bird, 1989b), while 'she was unfaithful to him' is problematic, as there is no mention of an 'other' with whom she has been unfaithful, and the specific word (נאף) is not used.

19.3 Her husband[9] rose and came after her to persuade her[10] to have a change of heart.[11] He had with him his boy servant[12] and a team of donkeys. She brought him to the house of her father; when the girl's father saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.

19.4 His father-in-law, the girl's father,[13] prevailed on him, so he stayed with him for three days. They ate and drank, and they spent[14] the night there.

[9] While there are different categories of wives/female partners, there is one category of male partners: husbands. Here, we have אישה (her man), the usual description of a husband; later in the chapter, אדוניה (her lord), another word for husband.

[10] Translation of the idiom דבר על לב often reflects the heart as the seat of emotions. This cannot be taken for granted however. While this happens within the Old Testament, the heart is much more often considered to be the seat of noetic activity and the ethical centre of a person (Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament VII, 2011). The idiom 'speak to someone's heart' is used in a variety of contexts that generally intend to support or comfort, though this use is not exclusive (p. 418). In Hosea 2.14, the meaning, within a lawsuit context, is much closer to entice or persuade. A sharp distinction between heart and mind is unhelpful at this point, and the writing intentionally ambiguous. Given the Levite never actually speaks to his concubine (that we know), and given how he treats her later on, a more neutral, ambiguous meaning seems more appropriate – hence my choice of 'persuade'. Given the importance of the heart in the rest of the chapter, I have retained the word לב in the second part of the sentence with 'change of heart' rather than switching to 'change of mind'.

[11] The choice between *Khetiv* and *Qere* here is not obvious. The *Qere* (להשיבה) refers directly to the concubine, and the thought of the Levite wanting to bring her back is consistent with his characterisation and fits the context. The *Qere* is widely supported. The *Khetiv*, להשיבו, with a 3ms suffix, could be ambiguous: does it refer to her heart, masculine in Hebrew, or to the Levite? Scholz (2010, p. 142) argues this should refer to the Levite, that he tries to convince her to take him back. The suggestion is interesting, but would make for very awkward grammar, as the concubine does not appear as subject in this clause, and stretch the meaning of the verb. If it refers to her heart, then there is a note of hope, later closed down: we never hear whether the Levite speaks to her, nor whether she has a change of heart. But he does 'bring *her* back'. The *Qere* collapses the earlier story into what happens further on. The *Khetiv* hints at possibilities never actualised. As such, I prefer the *Khetiv*.

[12] I have introduced a slight gloss. I am keeping 'boy' in order to highlight the parallel with the girl; however the term could be too ambiguous, and the mention of the boy's master in verse 11 points to the nature of the relationship (and heightens questions about the status of the פילגש).

[13] The double identifier here serves to clarify the ambiguous חתן, which could mean either son-in-law or father-in-law.

[14]BHS and BHQ disagree here. BHS suggests emending to a singular, following Old Greek and Latin. This would yield an expectable reading – the father-in-law speaks to the Levite directly, and only him; he stays. They (father and son-in-law) drink and eat together, and he (son-in-law) stays the night [at his father-in-law's house]. BHQ points out this is a facilitation; the Septuagint and the majority of Hebrew versions support MT. Given the fluidity of who is included or not in the verbal forms, the discontinuity with the first part of the verse is no evidence of corruption.

19.5 On the fourth day, they rose early in the morning; when he got up to go, the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Sustain your heart[15] with a morsel of bread. Afterwards, you all go."[16]

19.6 So they stayed. The two of them ate and drank together. Then the girl's father said to the man, "Please stay the night, you will enjoy it heartily."

19.7 The man got up to go but his father-in-law pressed him, so he stayed[17] and spent the night there.

19.8 He rose early to go on the morning of the fifth day, but the girl's father said, "please, sustain your heart, and wait[18] until the day declines". So the two of them ate.

19.9 The man got up to leave, himself, his concubine and his boy-servant. But his father-in-law, the father of the young girl, said to him: "Just look! The day has declined and turned to evening; please all stay the night. See, the day is almost gone, so spend[19] the night here, enjoy yourself with good heart. Then you can all rise early tomorrow to be on your way and go[20] to your tent."[21]

19.10 But the man was unwilling to stay overnight. Instead, he got up to go and journeyed until Jebus was in sight (that is, Jerusalem). He had with him his team of donkeys, saddled, and his concubine also.

19.11 By the time they got near Jebus, most of the day had gone,[22] so the boy said to his master: "Let's go and turn to this city of the Jebusites, and spend the night there."

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[15] The expression is awkward in English, yet it is helpful to pick up on the 'heart' motif, as it echoes 19.3, and will be used repeatedly in the chapter.

[16] I have added a gloss with a subject in order to show the move from singular to plural.

[17] BHQ notes variants in the Greek in deriving וישב either from ישב or from שוב. Both readings are possible and make sense, with little influence on interpretation.

[18] The mood is imperative, though often rendered as 'they waited' – the wording makes sense either way, but there is no obvious reason to modify MT.

[19] Singular

[20] Singular

[21] The natural translation here would be 'go home', as אהל is used elsewhere as a synonym for home (2 Sm. 20.1; 1 Kgs 12.16). Aschkensay argues that there is an intentional contrast between the father's house and the husband's tent, indicating differential status and a slur on the Levite's living conditions (1998, p. 67). I do not think that the argument is convincing, as the Levite goes to his 'house' in 19.29. It is worth noting that several manuscripts have a plural here, which could indicate a stronger sense of 'home' as the place where several families dwell, or be an indication of wealth; either option goes against Aschkenasy's argument.

[22] BHQ suggests restoring ירד as the only suggestion that makes sense, together with LXX (p. 107).

19.12 But his master answered: “We will not turn to a foreign city where[23] there is no-one from the sons[24] of Israel, but we shall cross over to Gibeah.”

19.13 He said to his boy: “Go! Let us draw near one of these places so we may spend the night in Gibeah or Ramah.”

19.14 They crossed and went over, and the sun went down over them by Gibeah, which is in Benjamin.

19.15 They turned aside there to go spend the night in Gibeah. He went and sat in the city square but no-one invited them to spend the night at their house.

19.16 But at last, an old man came along, back from his work in the field, in the evening. The man had come from the hill country of Ephraim, but was sojourning in Gibeah. The men in that place were Benjaminites.

19.17 He looked up and saw the traveller in the city square; the old man said, “where are you[25] going and where do you come from?”

19.18 He replied, “We are journeying from Bethlehem in Judah to the remote parts of the hill country of Ephraim. This is where I am from. I went to Bethlehem in Judah, and I frequent[26] the house of Yahweh[27] yet no man has invited me in.

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[23] Translating הנה is problematic as there is no clear antecedent or referent. BHQ’s suggestion to treat it as an adverb of place seems to make the most sense (p. 107).

[24] While it is fashionable to translate this as ‘the children of Israel’, the context of my study demands the non-gender inclusive translation to reflect on processes of construction of collective identity and how women are positioned with regards to it.

[25] Singular

[26] This is a difficult passage, as את is not a usual complement for הלך, nor does it make sense as a goal given a goal has already been mentioned. BHQ (p. 108) argues that we need to read the expression as a frequentative, as in Proverbs 13.20 - I frequent the house of Yahweh, or, indeed, I serve in the house of Yahweh, i.e. I am a Levite. The indignation of the following clause then makes sense: I am a Levite and do my duty, therefore how can the men of Gibeah not invite me in? This reading fits both grammar and characterisation, hence my choice to go with BHQ.

[27] LXX has ‘my house’, καὶ εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου ἐγὼ πορεύομαι, which removes the difficulty and yields a repetitive, ‘I am going home’; V, S and T however follow MT. Despite the difficulty, MT makes sense, as shown above, is in character, and therefore seems preferable.

19.19 We have straw and fodder for our donkeys, and bread and wine for me, your maidservant[28] and the boy. Your servants[29] do not lack a thing."

19.20 The old man replied, "Peace be with you.[30] I will care for all your needs, but just do not spend the night in the square."

19.21 He brought him to his house and fed[31] the donkeys. They washed their feet, then they ate and drank.

19.22 They were enjoying themselves heartily when suddenly, the men of the city, worthless[32] men, closed round the house, banging violently on the doors. They said to the lord[33] of the house (the old man), "Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know[34] with him."

19.23 The lord of the house went out to them and said, "No, my brothers, please do not commit evil now this man has come to my house, do not do such a disgraceful thing.

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[28] The usual translation here reflects some form of 'servant', usually 'maidservant'. Commentators differ as to the significance. A number of – usually feminist – commentators argue this is an indication of the woman's status as a 'slave-wife' (García Bachmann, 2013; Klein, 1989; Ryan, 2007). I find this argument unlikely, given the distinct status of פילגש. It is more likely a mark of respectful address, as in 1 Samuel 1 and 1 Samuel 25. Furthermore, the entire group is referred to as עבדיך, your servants, in the next sentence.

[29] MT and Old Greek both have a plural, while the LXX, V and T have a singular. The singular would be further evidence of respectful address (see previous note). The plural dilutes the respectful self-abasement of the Levite in a way that is more consistent with characterisation.

[30] The entire verse is addressed to a masculine singular subject.

[31] The choice between *Khetiv* (ויבול) and *Qere* (ויבל) makes little difference here. Both verbs have few parallels and quasi-identical meanings are dictated by the context, whether derived from בליל (fodder) or יבול (produce of the soil). Semantically, the *Qere* fits better, while the *Khetiv* occurs more frequently. In either case however, a uniquely occurring verb is derived from a little-used substantive (BHQ, p. 108).

[32] The expression is variously translated. While some prefer 'wicked' (Niditch, 2008), the more common 'worthless' (Block, 1999; Webb, 2012) better reflects the likely etymology, from בלה, 'to become old and worn out', and figuratively, destroy (BDB, 2010, p. 245).

[33] I have chosen to use the word 'lord' to preserve the link between the Levite being בעל to the boy and to his concubine, the old man being בעל of the house, and, later on, the men of Gibeah being בעל of the city. I had already used 'master' to translate אדון and so chose lord here.

[34] While 'know' is less idiomatic than another euphemistic translation such as 'sleep with', the connotations of possession and mastery are too important to gloss over in an Irigarayan reading.

19.24 See, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine, let me bring them[35] out to you; abuse[36] *them*, treat *them* in whatever way seems good in your own eyes[37] but to this man, do not do such a disgraceful thing."

19.25 But the men were not prepared to listen to him, so the man[38] seized his concubine and threw her out to them. They knew[39] her and abused her ruthlessly all night until morning. They cast her away[40] as[41] the day dawned.

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[35] BHK and BHS had proposed corrections to the text given the pronoun is masculine plural. This however is not entirely unusual as masculine suffixes for women are found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (BHQ, p. 109 and Gesenius, 1910, p. 465). There is no reason to amend MT as it is attested by all extant witnesses.

[36] Translating ענה here needs some caution; it is one of the Biblical terms that could most easily be translated as 'rape', though this is, to a degree, an interpretation dependent on context, as there is no verb that translates 'rape' exactly. When approaching a culture that has a radically different approach to sexuality and the relation between persons, it is difficult to define rape in relation primarily to individual consent (see 5.3.2). There is scope within the Hebrew Bible for a concept of unlawful sexual intercourse which violates an unwilling victim; in these cases, ענה is often used (Deut. 22.29; 2 Samuel 13.14). Translating 'rape' however focuses attention on the victim in a way that is not necessarily in keeping with the intent of the text (for further exploration, see Gravett, 2004; Kawashima, 2011; Scholz, 2010; van Wolde, 2002). In Judges 19, we have a nexus of verbs referring to sexual intercourse and force (ענה, ידע, עלל, חזק) which, taken together, paint a picture that fits the modern concept of 'rape'. The question is, at what point is it appropriate to translate ענה as rape? The connotation of an illegal action inviting moral reprobation makes is at odds with the old man's willingness to offer his daughter and the concubine. A euphemism, similar to the men's demand to 'know' the Levite, better fits the context of men trying to navigate their way through a degrading, hopeless situation.

[37] This is a little clumsy. It would be more elegant to have 'as you see fit', or something to that effect, but it is important to keep the allusion to the leitmotif that concludes this episode and the entire book.

[38] It is unclear whether 'the man' is the old man (the natural antecedent as the subject of the previous sentence) or the Levite; given the possessive 'his concubine', it is more logical to assume the Levite takes his own concubine, though a different reading is still possible. In addition, we are told the old man has gone out to the mob, and promised to 'bring out' his daughter and the concubine, which suggests the Levite was still inside, with the women, and therefore able to grab his concubine and throw her out.

[39] While it is tempting to use a verb that indicates abuse, I prefer to keep the echo of what happens later with the daughters of Shiloh and the apparent lack of difference between consensual and forced intercourse. See also note 34.

[40] Here I am persuaded by Berman's argument (2004, p. 67) that the more usual translation of 'release' or 'let go' masks the violence of the action and implies compassion or positive intent. Berman draws a parallel with 2 Sam. 13.15-17, where the sending away of Tamar is Amnon's final act of violence and humiliation against her. Hence 'cast away' or 'discard' seems more appropriate.

[41] The difference between *Khetiv* (בעלות) and *Qere* (כעלות) is minimal. The *Qere* bears a stronger sense of simultaneity. As it is well attested (BHQ, p. 55), I see no reason to change the *Qere*.

19.26 By morning the woman came and collapsed on the entrance of the man's house, where her master[42] was, until daylight.

19.27 Her master got up in the morning and opened the doors of the house. He came out, ready to be on his way, and there! His concubine[43] was lying at the entrance of the house, her hands over the threshold.

19.28 He said to her, "Get up and let's go!". But there was no answer.[44] [45] So he slung her over the donkey, got up and went home.

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[42] I chose to translate 'master' rather than lord or husband, to preserve the parallel between נער and נערה and their common אדון. The use of the plural אדניה has sometimes be seen as puzzling (Klein, 1989). It does however fall into the category of *pluralis excellentiae* as described by Genesius (1910, p. 399), and is particularly frequent with 2nd and 3rd person suffixes. There is therefore no need to follow Klein in attributing meaning to the plural (especially since the same form is followed by a singular verb in the next verse).

[43] Here we have the second instance of אשה פלגש; there is no obvious reason to deviate from the translation in 19.1.

[44] There is some ambiguity about how to translate ענה. Is it, 'there was no answering/answer', or is it, 'there was no answerer/ no-one to answer', which could imply she was dead (Niditch, 2008, p. 189). The expression is found elsewhere: in 1 Samuel 14.39, for 'no-one answered' (but they were all alive), 1 Kg 18.26 where Baal does not answer, 'there was no sound and there was no answer' (either no answer, or Baal does not exist, but this seems to indicate a meaning closer to 'answer'); the case is even clearer in 1 Kgs 18.29 with a series of substantive uses, 'no voice, no answer, no attentiveness', or Isaiah 66.4. Mal. 2.12 suits the 'answerer/person who answers' interpretation. Other instances are more clearly verbal uses – Job 5.1, Job 32.12, Prov. 25.18, Gen. 25.3. On balance, I think Niditch overstates the case, and it is preferable to go with a fairly neutral 'there was no answer'.

[45] Here both LXX^{A} and LXX^{B} add that the concubine was dead or had died. This appears to be an addition to explain why there was no answer. The difference between Greek and Hebrew texts is significant. MT never mentions when the concubine dies, which heightens the plight of the concubine and the ambiguity of the Levite's attitude. If we do not know whether the concubine has died, his callousness in telling her to get up is heightened, and readers do not know who deals the fatal blow – the men of Gibeah, or the Levite in moving her when she is injured, or when dismembering her. BHQ points out that there is no textual reason for choosing to go with LXX (p. 109). What LXX does is remove ambiguity, make the Levite a more acceptable protagonist, and lessen discomfort for readers. As such, it could be a facilitation. As the rest of the chapter is marked by other ambiguities, retaining MT seems preferable. Most commentators go with MT and argue that LXX is an addition designed to give additional explanation and/or deal with a text found too uncomfortable (Ackerman, 1998; Burney, 1918; Block, 1999; Butler, 2009; Chisholm, 2013; Moore, 1985; Schneider, 1999; Soggin, 1981; Webb, 2012).

19.29 When he got to his house,[46] he took the knife,[47] grabbed his concubine and cut her up, limb by limb, in twelve pieces. Then he sent her[48] into all the territory of Israel.

19.30 All those who saw, said,[49] "Nothing like this has happened or been seen since the days when the sons of Israel came out of the land Egypt, not until this day. Dwell upon her![50] give counsel![51] speak out!"

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[46] See note 21.

[47] The word for knife, מאכלת, is unusual and only appears in Genesis 22.6, 10 and Proverbs 30.14. As such, there is a possible allusion to Genesis 22 and Isaac, with an exact match to the expression in Genesis 22.10.

[48] The pronoun remains 'her', rather than the expected 'them', referring to the twelve pieces. This could be explained, however, by the fact that most words for corpse are feminine (נפש, נבלה, גויה, are all feminine, whereas פגר is masculine).

[49] There is a long addition in LXX^{A}, whereas LXX^{B} follows MT. The addition suggests that the Levite commanded a messenger and gave him something to say:
καὶ ἐγένετο πᾶς ὁ ὁρῶν ἔλεγεν οὔτε ἐγενήθη οὔτε ὤφθη οὕτως ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἀναβάσεως υἱῶν Ισραηλ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης καὶ ἐνετείλατο τοῖς ἀνδράσιν οἷς ἐξαπέστειλεν λέγων τάδε ἐρεῖτε πρὸς πάντα ἄνδρα Ισραηλ εἰ γέγονεν κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἀναβάσεως υἱῶν Ισραηλ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης θέσθε δὴ ἑαυτοῖς βουλὴν περὶ αὐτῆς καὶ λαλήσατε. ἐπορεύθη ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἡ παλλακὴ αὐτου.
The addition suggests a doublet, but makes sense in terms of narrative: the command to consider, take counsel and speak appears logical for the Levite to issue, since he is orchestrating events. He would lead the people into a certain reaction through the use of a rhetorical question, followed by a reiteration in command form to motivate action. There is however no grammatical subject in the sentence to issue the command. It is possible that the repetition could have been dropped from the original precisely because it is repetitive. The last clause of the verse would seem to fit well on the lips of one person, seeing the reaction of the people, rather than being the reaction of 'all who see'. It would be expected that some form of explanation would be sent together with the body parts; restoring MT to LXX^{A} does not, however, offer this explanation. Boling (1975, p. 277) argues that the original would have been a conflation of MT and LXX and he therefore offers a translation that omits the doublet, but keeps in a messenger with a question. Soggin similarly reconstructs a hypothetical verse (1981, p. 289).
On the other hand, the rest of the narrative is terse and clipped, with little explanation, which fits with MT. Furthermore, the community acts as one in the next verse, and it is entirely plausible for the community to react to what they see in the way reported, and decide for themselves, as a group, rather than as distinct individuals, that they need to gather together to think, take counsel and speak. As MT does make sense as it is and there is no overwhelming textual reason to prefer LXX^{A}, and indeed, LXX^{B} follows MT, I will keep MT, along with the majority of contemporary commentators (Butler, 2009; Chisholm, 2013; Niditch, 2008; Webb, 2012).

[50] The lack of mind or heart as an object somewhat clouds the meaning. There is no parallel use of שים. One would expect לבב, yielding a meaning of 'set your hearts/minds' on this (the feminine pronoun could be a generic one referring to 'this' as in the first part of the verse, or refer to the concubine, 'her'). One may assume a similar meaning here despite the omission. 'Set yourselves upon it/her', 'apply yourselves to it/her', 'dwell upon it/her' – all convey the meaning reasonably adequately.

[51] The meaning here depends on whether this is derived from עוץ (plan) or יעצ (counsel). The former would be a *hapax* whose meaning derives from עצה. The latter is grammatically more problematic. While 'take counsel' is a common translation choice (Block, 1999; Boling, 1975; Niditch, 2008; Soggin, 1981), this is not grammatically consistent. 'Take counsel' translates a *Niphal*, not a *Qal*. Deriving the root from יעץ would yield a *Qal* imperative, 'counsel!' or 'give

20.1 All the sons of Israel came forth and the congregation assembled as one man, from Dan to Beer-Sheba and the land of Gilead, before Yahweh at Mizpah.

20.2 The leaders of all the people, from every tribe of Israel, presented themselves before the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand men, on foot, drawing the sword.

20.3 The sons of Benjamin heard that the sons of Israel had gone up to Mizpah. The sons of Israel asked, "speak,[52] how did such evil come about?"

20.4 So the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, testified.[53] He said, "I went to Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to spend the night.

20.5 The lords[54] of Gibeah rose against me, they surrounded me at the house[55] at night. They had planned to kill me, and they abused[56] my concubine and[57] she died.[58]

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counsel!', (though the pointing is still problematic), consistent with the next command, 'speak out'. Webb (2012, p. 472) suggests 'confer about it', and Chilsholm (2013, p. 500) 'discuss it'. Both of those are a slight gloss suggesting interaction rather than each person speaking out their mind or advice on the matter.

[52] We have an imperative plural here. It isn't entirely clear who this is addressed to, as it is the Levite only who answers. Is the Levite, or the Benjaminites (they have just been mentioned, and representatives of Gibeah were said to be there), being asked for their version? Or both? Is only one answer recorded?

[53] It is unclear whether this is a trial (in which case the Levite 'testifies'), or a simple discussion (in which case he 'answers'). If the Benjaminites are present, and both them and the Levite are being asked for their version of events, then it is fair to assume some form of trial. The 'trial' motif is picked up later in the parallel story with the use of ריב (21.22).

[54] The expression could refer to the rulers of Gibeah, or simply its inhabitants. There is an echo in בעלי הגבה of the בני-בליעל of earlier; given the interesting switches between the old man being בעל, then the Levite being בעל, and now the men being בעל, I have chosen a translation that recalls both. See also note 42.

[55] עלי is omitted from several translations; it does not obviously fit into the sentence structure, yet it is an important detail in terms of the focus of the Levite's tale. I have turned עלי into the main object in order to reflect the antagonistic nuance of the preposition.

[56] See note 36.

[57] It would be possible to render the *vav* as a causative 'so' or with a temporal-causative 'until', as indeed, the NRSV does (though the concubine did not die until some unspecified, later time, after she walked back to the house). The Hebrew however is looser, and I prefer to retain the ambiguity of the original.

[58] It is interesting to note the change of subject here: from 'they surrounded, they planned, they raped' to 'she died'. The woman had already been said to have been murdered, so why not use the word and keep grammatical coherence? If, of course, it is the men of Gibeah who killed her.

20.6 So I grabbed my concubine, cut her to pieces, and sent her to all the regions of Israel's territory; because they committed such a wicked, disgraceful thing in Israel.

20.7 So, all of you, sons of Israel, speak out and take your own counsel,[59] here and now!"

20.8 All the people rose as one, saying: "None of us will go back to our tents and none of us shall return to our houses.

20.9 Now, this is what we will do to Gibeah, against her, by lot.[60]

20.10 We will take ten men out of every hundred, from each of the tribes of Israel, and one hundred out of every thousand, and a thousand out of every ten thousand, to get provisions for the people,[61] so they may do this as[62] they get to Gibeah[63] in Benjamin, because of the disgraceful thing it has committed in Israel.

20.11 All the men of Israel gathered by the city, united as one.

20.12 The tribes of Israel sent men to all the clans[64] of Benjamin to say, "What is this evil that was committed among you?

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[59] There seems to be an echo of 19.30 here; as such I leant towards a translation that picks up on the wording of 19.30. לכם suggests a more reflexive translation that simply 'giving advice', this is a call to action, hence 'take your own counsel'.

[60] Together with LXX, many alternatives have been suggested to facilitate meaning, usually to render something like 'we will go against her by lot' or 'we will cast lot against her'. Those are not in MT however, and while they make the meaning more explicit, they are not strictly needed.

[61] עם could potentially be translated as troops. However, there is an interesting dynamic about who the 'people' are, who is in, and who is out, and I prefer to keep using the term so as to analyse fluctuations in meaning and concepts of collective identity. The use of the term in both neutral and military contexts is interesting in itself.

[62] While there has been a tradition of reversing the order of the two infinitives in Hebrew, MT is well-attested in extant manuscripts, and supported by LXX^{B}. The variation in meaning is minor (from 'so they may do this as they arrive' to 'so they may get to Gibeah and do this') and irrelevant for our purpose here.

[63] Gibeah and Gebah are thought to be used interchangeably (BHQ, p. 112) – or at least frequently confused.

[64] MT has a plural, though all other versions except T support a singular (BHQ, p. 112). BDB argues that שבט is used for the subdivisions of a tribe in Numbers 5.18. The suggestion fits, especially in light of 21.8, when 'Jabesh-Gilead' is treated as שבט. The plural is interesting in introducing a notion of differentiation within the tribe, between the men of Gibeah and the rest of the tribe. At this point in the narrative, there is a possibility that other families or clans within the tribe may distance themselves from Gibeah.

20.13 Now, hand over the worthless sons of Gibeah, so we can put them to death, and eradicate[65] evil from Israel." But the sons[66] of Benjamin refused to listen to the voice of their brothers, the sons of Israel.

20.14 The sons of Benjamin gathered from the towns to Gibeah to come out in battle with the sons of Israel.

20.15 The sons of Benjamin were mustered from the towns on that day, twenty-six thousand men, drawing the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah (they had mustered seven hundred chosen men).

20.16 From this people,[67] seven hundred chosen men were left-handed, all of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.

20.17 The men of Israel, apart from Benjamin, mustered four hundred thousand men drawing the sword, all of them men of war.

20.18 They rose and went up to Bethel to enquire of God. The sons of Israel asked, "Who among us shall first go out to battle with the sons of Benjamin?" Yahweh answered, "Judah first."

20.19 The sons of Israel got up in the morning and set up camp against Gibeah.

20.20 The men of Israel came out for battle with Benjamin, and the men of Israel lined themselves up for battle by Gibeah.

20.21 The sons of Benjamin came out of Gibeah, and on that day, they struck down twenty-two thousand men from Israel.

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[65] While BHQ suggests adding in the definite article, together with Moore (1985, p. 430) and Burney (1918, p. 474), the sentence makes sense without. It is consistent with war speech to extend the actions of a few to represent 'evil' in general. As such, I prefer to follow MT, as do extant manuscripts.

[66] The *Khetiv* omits בני. As the *Qere* is well-attested in all versions but V, and sustains the parallel with בני-בליעל and בני-ישראל, there is no reason to change it.

[67] MT is unclear here. The repetition of 'seven hundred' suggests identification between the two groups, but this is unlikely; 'the people' is more likely to refer to the overall army of Benjamin. LXX does not have the first part of verse 16.

20.22 The people, men of Israel, mustered their strength and once again lined up for battle in the place where they had lined up the first day.[68]

20.23 The sons of Israel went up and cried before Yahweh until evening; then they asked Yahweh: "Should I[69] again prepare for battle with the sons of Benjamin, my brother?". Yahweh answered, "Go up against them."

20.24 So the sons of Israel approached the sons of Benjamin on the second day.

20.25 Benjamin came out of Gibeah to meet them on the second day. And yet again, they struck down eighteen thousand men out of Israel, all of them drawing the sword.

20.26 All the sons of Israel and all the people came up to go to Bethel and weep. There they stayed before Yahweh and fasted till evening on that day. They offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Yahweh.

20.27 They enquired of Yahweh, for this is where the ark of the covenant of God was at that time.

20.28 (In those days, Phinehas,[70] son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, was the one ministering before it.) "Should I once again go out to battle with the sons of Benjamin, my brother, or should I refrain?" Yahweh answered, "Go, for tomorrow I will give them in your hand."

20.29 So Israel set some ambushes around Gibeah.

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[68] Verses 22 and 23 are often swapped round by commentators and in translations (e.g. NRSV) to make better sense of the sequence of events. There is no textual basis for the emendation however as manuscripts agree on the order (BHQ, p. 114).

[69] MT has 'I' which I assume is a collective I on behalf of the people. Translations usually render it as 'we', which is the more elegant and expectable form; however in a study of the relationship between individual and communal constructions of subjectivity, the choice of pronouns is too interesting to gloss over. In addition, the use of pronouns and inter-tribe relationships between the different petitions to Yahweh shows an interesting evolution.

[70] I have treated the second half of verse 27 and first half of 28 as a parenthetical statement explaining the arrangement in Bethel at the time. Direct speech then follows, introduced in Hebrew by לאמר. I have left לאמר out on purpose given the antecedent is so far away; besides, there is a note of uncertainty as to who is speaking – Phinehas (mentioned just before a speech in the 1cs) or the sons of Israel (the logical speakers, introduced earlier). The mention of Phinehas places the narrative very early in the chronology of Judges, rather than a sequential timing after Judges 18. Given that Phinehas is the only person mentioned by name, in a narrative that names only places, I think he functions as a temporal locator, and is not meant to be an active participant. For more on Phinehas and the links between his presence here and in Numbers and Joshua, see Organ (2001).

20.30 Then the sons of Israel came up against the sons of Benjamin on the third day. They drew up the battle lines by Gibeah, as before.

20.31 The sons of Benjamin came out to meet the people and were drawn away from the town, and began to slaughter the people, as before, by the highway that goes between Bethel and Gibeah,[71] in the open country, where thirty men of Israel were killed.

20.32 The sons of Benjamin thought, "They are stricken down before us, just as before", while the sons of Israel were thinking, "let us flee and lure them away from the city onto the highways."

20.33 So all the men of Israel left where they were to line themselves up in Baal-Tamar, and there the men who had been lying-in-wait burst out of their hiding-places in the unprotected[72] areas of Gibeah.

20.34 Ten thousand men, picked from the whole of Israel, came before Gibeah and hard fighting ensued, but they[73] did not know that disaster had come upon them.

20.35 So Yahweh struck down Benjamin before Israel, and on that day, the sons of Israel killed twenty-five thousand one hundred men from Benjamin, all of them drawing the sword.

20.36 The sons of Benjamin realised that they had been defeated when the men of Israel had given ground to Benjamin, because they trusted the ambush in Gibeah.

20.37 Those lying in wait hurried over to attack Gibeah, and the ambushers proceeded to kill the whole town by the sword.[74]

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[71] There is some discussion as to whether this is a crossing between two roads or one road between two places. As precise locations are not known, a precise translation is not possible.

[72] The meaning of ממערה is uncertain. While it has traditionally been interpreted as a 'bare place, open space', this makes little sense as it would provide little opportunity for ambush. LXX varies it as 'West', which again contradicts the narrative. BHQ (p. 116) argues for a third option, the 'bare side', derived from ערוה (nudity, vulnerability) as in, unprotected, furthest from battle, where no other troops are, which fits the context best.

[73] The Benjaminites.

[74] This appears to be a flashback to earlier action; I wondered whether to translate in the pluperfect for scrupulous tense accuracy but it makes the translation cumbersome, and clarifies something which isn't clear in the narration.

20.38 The agreement between the men of Israel and those lying in ambush, was that when they let smoke rise from the town,[75]

20.39 the men of Israel would turn back from the battle. Benjamin began to inflict casualties on Israel, thirty men, so they said, "Surely they are completely defeated before us, just as in the first battle!"

20.40 But when the cloud began to go up from the town as a pillar of smoke, Benjamin turned round, and behold! The entire city was going up to the heavens.

20.41 Now the men of Israel turned back, and the men of Benjamin were struck with terror, for now they realised that disaster had fallen upon them.

20.42 So they turned away from the men of Israel, in the direction of the desert, but the battle kept up with them. Those from the towns were destroying him in its[76] midst.[77]

20.43 They surrounded Benjamin, pursued[78] them from a place of rest and caught up with them East of Gibeah.

20.44 Eighteen thousand men from Benjamin fell, all of them men of valour.

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[75] The translation of הָרֵב, pointed as it is, is problematic, as it does not fit either grammatically or semantically. Various solutions are proposed in BHQ, none of which are fully satisfactory nor widely accepted. Soggin (1981, p. 294) and Boling (1975, p. 287) vary the pointing to הָרָב, yielding a meaning of 'the main ambush', the problem being that we have not been told of any subsidiary ambushes, and the masculine plural suffix on the following infinitive then seems redundant; LXX^{B} reads as a translation of הָרֵב, an obscure form of to 'augment'. The most common approach (Moore, 1985, p. 439; Burney, 1918, p. 459) is to omit הרב altogether, which is what I have done here, in line with LXX^{A}.

[76] It is unclear what this refers to. It cannot be the battle as this would be feminine singular; the most logical referents would be 'man' Benjamin or Israel.

[77] The entire clause is unclear. The plural ערים is confusing. One would expect the ambushers to have come out and helped; however there is good textual support for the plural here. BHQ suggests that the Benjaminites not from Gibeah, mentioned earlier (v.14-15), had joined the Israelite army and joined in the battle against the men of Gibeah. If this is the case, then the following account of the eradication of the Benjaminites makes no sense. An alternative explanation could be that those mustered from the cities of Israel were now killing the 'evil' (Benjamin) in their midst. The difficulty here is that Israel has not been mentioned as 'the cities' before. On the other hand, it explains the masculine singular pronoun, 'in his midst'. Other ambush accounts (e.g. Joshua 8) are equally muddled and difficult. I have chosen a translation that preserves the terseness of the original, and could fit either interpretation.

[78] הרדיפהו is an unusual form; the only occurrence of רדף in the *Hiphil*. BHQ suggests that this could be an internal *Hiphil* with intensive meaning, or a corruption of וירדפהו. The choice has little impact on translation.

20.45 They turned and fled to the wilderness, to the cliffs of Rimmon, but they [the Israelites] caught[79] them on the highways, five thousand men. They pursued them until they cut them off,[80] and killed two thousand men.

20.46 From Benjamin on that day, twenty-five thousand men fell, all of them men who drew the sword, all of them men of valour.

20.47 Six hundred men turned aside into the wilderness and fled to the cliffs of Rimmon, and they lived in the cliffs of Rimmon for four months.

20.48 The sons of Israel turned back to the sons of Benjamin and put them to the sword, from the parts of the town still standing[81] to the cattle to all that was left; and all the towns that were left, they set on fire also.

21.1 Now, in Mizpah, the men of Israel had sworn:[82] "No man among us shall give his daughter in marriage to Benjamin."

21.2 The people came to Bethel and remained there until evening before God. They lifted their voices and wept bitterly.

21.3 They said, "Why, O Yahweh, God of Israel, has such a thing happened in Israel, that one tribe should be missing from Israel?"

21.4 The following day, the people rose early to build an altar in that place, and offer burnt offerings and peace offerings.

21.5 Then the sons of Israel said, "Who among all the tribes of Israel has not come up to Yahweh in the assembly?" For a great oath had been taken concerning whoever failed to come up to Yahweh at Mizpah: "they should surely die".

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[79] There is a choice of meanings here – we could have 'deal severely with them' or 'caught' (in line with the meaning 'to glean'). The latter makes more sense within the sequence of action.

[80] This is often translated as a place name. BHQ argues that this should be read as a *piel* infinitive of גדע with 3mp suffix, which is often constructed with עד and ties in with 21.6. Again, this fits in with the logical sequence of events.

[81] The meaning of מתם is debated. As it is, it can be read as מְתֹם, for integrity and health – possibly the parts of the town that were still sound; similar expressions are found in Isaiah 1.6 and Psalm 38.4. Many commentators suggest repointing to מֻתָּם, which makes more immediate sense and reflects parallel expressions in Deuteronomy 2.34 and 3.6 (Boling, 1975, p. 288; Soggin, 1981, p. 296). This however would be a facilitation, and I prefer to follow MT as a *lectio difficilior* that still makes sense.

[82] While a present sequence of events is possible, a pluperfect makes more sense: this is additional information which the narrator had withdrawn, but has now become relevant.

21.6 And the sons of Israel took pity on Benjamin their brother, and they said, “today one tribe has been cut off[83] from Israel.

21.7 What can we do about wives for those who remain, since we swore to Yahweh that we would not give them our daughters in marriage?”

21.8 So they asked, “Which one of the tribes of Israel has failed to come up to Yahweh at Mizpah?” And lo and behold, no man from Jabesh-Gilead had come to the camp for the assembly -

21.9 when the people were mustered, there had been no resident there from Jabesh-Gilead.

21.10 So the congregation sent twelve thousand men there, from the warriors, and gave them the command: “Go and put the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead to the sword, including women and children.[84]

21.11 This is what you shall do: all the men, and all the women who have ever known a male by lying with him,[85] you will devote to the ban.”[86]

21.12 Out of the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, they found four hundred girls,[87] virgins, who had never known a man, never lain with a male; so they brought them to the camp in Shiloh, in the land of Canaan.

21.13 The whole congregation sent word to the sons of Benjamin living at the cliffs of Rimmon and proclaimed peace to them.

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[83] Some manuscripts read נגרע, possibly due to confusion between ד and ר. Textual witnesses however largely support MT, including LXX^{B} (BHQ, p. 119).

[84] BHQ points out that ‘all the Greek witnesses attest two words at the end of the verse, except *ms* B’ (p. 119). There is no compelling reason however to deviate from MT in favour of καὶ τὸν λαόν, which does not fit as easily into the sequence.

[85] Some translations have emended to one ‘know/lie with’ but the repetition is important for emphasis.

[86] I have left the rather imprecise ‘devote to the ban’ for חרם rather than replace with ‘exterminate’ or ‘utterly destroy’. While the later context would justify those translations, they do not include the ritual/religious nuance of the word. In addition, there is a substantial amount of discussion around the exact meaning of חרם, though a full discussion is beyond the scope of this study (see Feldman, 2004; Hoffman, 1999; Niditch, 1993; Siebert, 2012; Stern, 1991; Zehnder, 2012).

[87] I chose ‘girls’ for continuity of translation with the woman of chapter 19.

21.14 So at that time Benjamin came back, and they gave them the women who had survived from the women of Jabesh-Gilead, but they had not found enough for them.

21.15 The people took pity on Benjamin, because Yahweh had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

21.16 The elders of the congregation wondered, "What can we do about wives for those that are left, since women were wiped out of Benjamin?"

21.17 They answered: "There must be an inheritance for the survivors[88] in Benjamin, so that no tribe is blotted out from Israel.

21.18 But we cannot possibly give them wives from our daughters!" This is because the sons of Israel had sworn, "cursed be whoever gives a wife to Benjamin!"

21.19 Then they thought, "There! Isn't it time for the yearly festival of Yahweh in Shiloh, which takes place[89] north of Bethel, east of the highway that goes from Bethel to Shechem and south to Lebonah?

21.20 They commanded[90] the sons of Benjamin: "Go set an ambush in the vineyards.

21.21 Then watch. If[91] the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance their round dances, then come out from the vineyards and let each man seize a woman for himself, from the daughters of Shiloh, then go back to Benjamin's territory.

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[88] The first part of the verse has caused problems and been variously emended and translated. The main issue is the nature of the 'inheritance', as the usual provision of land seems ill-fitting to the context. The consensus in modern translations is to assume that ירשה refers to the provision of heirs (Boling, 1975; Block, 1999; Niditch, 2008), and makes a logical link between the land and those who occupy it. In contrast, others (Chilsholm, 2013; Soggin, 1981) prefer to omit ירשה and simply focus the problem on whether a remnant will be preserved.

[89] I chose to attribute the subordinate clause to the festival rather than to Shiloh; both are possible, but it seems more plausible that the exact location of the festival be discussed, rather than Shiloh's, already mentioned as the place where camp was set up.

[90] The *Qere* (ויצוו) is well-supported by all versions, and makes most sense within the context. The *Khetiv* (ויצו) does not make sense.

[91] 'If' rather than 'when' is a more usual translation for אם, and introduces an element of uncertainty about outcome.

21.22 When their fathers or brothers come to protest[92] to us, then we will tell them, “be gracious to them for us, for we did not take wives for each man through battle, and you did not give them up willingly (in which case, you would be guilty).”

21.23 So this is exactly what the sons of Benjamin did. They carried the women away in the right numbers, abducted away from their dancing, and left and returned to their own territories, where they rebuilt towns and lived in them.

21.24 The sons of Israel then each returned from there to their tribes and families at that time, each man going back from there to his own inheritance.

21.25 At that time there was no king in Israel, and each man did what was right in his own eyes.

[92] The *Qere* (לריב) is supported by all versions and so is preferable to the *Khetiv* (לרוב). A derivation from רבב would not make sense, while an infinitive from ריב would be grammatically incorrect as this is a construct rather than absolute form.

Chapter 4.

Dissecting the dismembered text

Judges, as a book, has not had very good press over the centuries. Many preachers shy away from its stories of blood and gore, often dismissed as advocating war and violence, with some even suggesting it should be banned from liturgical use (Butler, 2009, xxxviii), which, indeed, it almost has been in the Common Lectionary. Heavily edited stories of Gideon and Samson occasionally make their way into public worship, but overall, Judges has been spurned by worshippers and interpreters alike. A regain of interest in recent years has seen feminist critics noting the high proportion of female characters in the book, as well as their increasingly abusive treatment as the story develops. The end of the book has suffered neglect to a greater degree even than earlier parts, often dismissed as nothing more than an appendix and chapter 19 as a simple domestic interlude (see 4.1.2.1).

It is hardly surprising that the worst story of abuse against women in Scripture has been edited out, because of its shock value, because of biases towards political readings of Scripture, and because many simply do not know what to do with these stories as part of their 'sacred text'. The next two chapters will attempt to give an answer to the question, how do we read Judges 19-21 as a sacred text? Following Irigaray's lead, I will first conduct an in-depth analysis of the text and narration, paying specific attention to issues of gender and otherness, and interrogating the contradictions, ambiguities and spaces that may be found within which different perspectives can emerge. In Chapter 5, I will then reflect in more depth on issues of identity and difference, using Irigaray's philosophy as a grid for interpretation.

4.1. Interpreting Judges 19-21

4.1.1. Judges as a whole

While there has been a history of interpreting Judges 19-21 separately from the main body of the text (4.1.2), in line with the historical-critical tendency to fragment the text into different constituent parts, this project will conduct a synchronic reading of 19-21, within a synchronic approach to the overall text of Judges. As such, I will start this chapter with some remarks on the text of Judges as a whole.

4.1.1.1. Placement within the canon

A central consideration in thinking of Judges is its positioning as a sacred text. What difference does it make that Judges 19-21 is part of the canon, and placed where it is within it? Irigaray reminds us of the crucial role of God-talk as giving coherence to a sense of identity, in creating a horizon that ensures passage between past and future, a bridge for a present that remembers (2.3.1). God-talk enables the past to be given coherence, but also the past to be pregnant with the seeds of a future becoming, forming an arc within which human identity can grow and develop, constantly changing, yet without endlessly reinventing itself and fragmenting over time. At its most basic, God-talk values events that must be remembered and integrated. Therefore, a book as controversial as Judges, with its violence and, at times, incomprehensible characters, begs us to ask, what is it we remember, what kind of bridge is being built between past and future?

There is integrity in remembering not just the best, but the worst of humanity. Yet God-talk for Irigaray is not simply an act of remembrance; it is about the coherence of memory that enables a different way of relating to the present and moving into the future. In this respect, telling stories of violence and failure is both necessary and dangerous. Necessary, because without it the link between memory and 'the real' is broken (1.2.3.1). Hence in approaching Judges, questions need to be asked about its historicity, and what it tells us of the 'real' of those who wrote the text. The link is not a simple representative link; rather the text opens a window onto the grammar of discourse of the time, and, behind it, the grammar of a reality constructed over time, and reaching forward into the present.

At a simple level, this can be seen in the function of Judges in the canon, placed between Joshua and Samuel. Judges problematises the entry into the Promised Land. It reinterprets the conquest narrative of Joshua, undermining achievements that were thought to be firmly acquired and the possibility of an easy transition into kingship for the future[93] through a portrayal of the disintegration of Israel and a careful analysis of the pitfalls of leadership. Within this framework, Judges 19-21 needs to be understood partly as one of the building blocks of the overall trajectory of the canon.

Judges in many ways 'systematically destroys everything Joshua has created' (Butler, 2009, p. lviii). The covenant of the end of Joshua is broken at the beginning of Judges; tribal cooperation turns to civil war; female heroes slowly turn into victims; religious

[93] The debate on Judges as an anti-Saulide polemic will be explored briefly in 4.1.1.5 but sits largely beyond the scope of this study.

rituals bring defeat rather than victory; apparent heroes lead the people into idolatry rather than into covenantal relationships; holy war is waged against Israel rather than external enemies. The picture of Israel in the time of the Judges is bleak, but not monochrome. Judges comes just before Ruth, also set in this time, where Bethlehem is also mentioned in connection to a specific woman, and yet there, Bethlehem is shown as a thriving community, where women are respected, and with 'justice at the gate' (Aschkenasy, 1998, p. 68). Similarly, the beginning of Samuel paints a different picture of the time of the Judges: one where leaders do fail, but where righteousness can still flourish and women like Hannah lead. Reading the story of the פילגש against those of Ruth and Hannah, set against the same Biblical time period, provides a wider commentary on the possibilities for redemption and healing (Trible, 2002, p. 65), as well as judgement on the earlier time. Different readings emerge in different canons. In MT, Judges is followed by Samuel. Both books ask questions about power and the social management of conflict, and the conditions for the success of a monarchy. In LXX, Judges 19-21 is followed by Ruth, which creates an opposition between a negative monarchy (that of Saul the Benjaminite) and a positive one (that of Judean David), which will then influence a reading of Samuel (Abadie, 2011, p. 21). Narrative evaluation of the story of Judges 19-21 therefore cannot be derived solely from the text itself, but from the way in which it is articulated canonically.

4.1.1.2. Some brief historical-critical considerations

Questions of Judges' place in the canon inevitably lead to questions of the dating and positioning of texts with respect to one another, mostly explored through historical-critical methods. These studies tend to dismiss 19-21 as an appendix, historically fanciful and thereby largely irrelevant (e.g. Soggin, 1981, p. 5; Mayes, 1974). Irigaray is wary of this kind of supposed historical objectivity. Yet equally, she warns that texts are written by real people seeking to communicate, which makes historical questions relevant. Speech-turned-text is a manifestation of the otherness of those who first uttered it (1.3.2). Understanding the grammar of otherness of the text immediately takes us into the question of genre and audience.

As this is primarily a sacred text, it has a specific function in life and liturgy and the construction of collective identity over time, and we need to consider the particular relationship of mythical/religious texts to specific communities of readers, and power relations established by positing a text as part of the canon (2.2.7). Reading Judges as a canonical text sets up the question: is this an 'example' text, a warning, a model, a

commentary? Genre is not easy to define across time, and interpreters have long disagreed over Judges, from Boling's reading of it as a realistic, gritty portrayal: 'stemming from the daily reality of ancient Israel's struggle for survival in in Canaan' (1975, p. 29) to Brettler's argument it is nothing but a late literary creation with no link to history (2002, p. 91). Abadie (2011, p. 13) argues that it is closest to the 'historical novel', built around 'exemplary figures from popular folklore' but distanced from the historical real by the consistent use of humour and irony. This distance then creates the space needed for critical interpretation, and enables the book to resemble a political pamphlet about the use and abuse of power in Israel. In the same vein, but from a very different perspective, Bal (1988a, p. 17) sees the book as historiographic rather than historical.

Clearly, from a cursory look at genre discussions, the writing of Judges exceeds easily defined categories. Here, Block (1999, p. 50) is helpful in pointing out that Judges displays a collection of our modern genres: conquest annals; paraenetic narrative; theological exposition; hero narratives; historical notes; annalistic rule lists; political speech; riddle; poetic fragments. Mythological and folk-tale elements may lead some to term it fiction, but this ignores vast swathes of the book, as well as discrepancies between modern concepts of history and genre as perceived in its historical context. Within the canon, Judges is considered part of the Former Prophets; as such it has been considered over time to address a specific historical and religious situation, and sets the work into both homiletic and paraenetic agendas. Judges is first and foremost a persuasive work, written for a reason, and meant to be read within a religious context, rather than simply a political text (Block, 1999, p. 57).

Defining genre too sharply is dangerous; it risks imposing categories that yield narrowed interpretation. So, for instance, seeing Judges solely as political commentary has led interpreters such as Boling to dismiss episodes concerning women as 'domestic'. In Irigarayan fashion, I would argue that whilst there are clear generic trajectories in the book, those are exceeded by the realities it represents. There are fissures in the text that allow that which is not allowed by the public grammar of discourse to come through: stories of women, stories of those who are not the political ruling class, and an irrepressible sense of irony and distance from conventional genres.

An Irigarayan reading of the text will therefore recognise the boundaries within which communication happens between self and other and ask what the cultural and social fabric of writer(s), reader(s) and characters were and how they interact, limit and affect

one another (1.3.2.3). Critics have debated the history of Judges and its relationship to 'history', and generally argued about a gap between 'events' (real or imagined) and writing, including the hypothesis of multiple redactional phases.

There is little agreement on authorship, redactors or historical positioning, but a broad consensus that the book consists of a number of original stories of local heroes, brought together into a book of 'saviours'. A first redaction is generally agreed to have taken place during the monarchy, followed by a post-exilic redaction that sheds doubts on the monarchy to come (Abadie, 2011, pp. 15-19; Boling, 1975, p. 11). Diachronic readings, such as those of Boling (1975), Burney (1918) or Frolov (2013) shed little light on the overall, canonical meaning of the text or its theology, tend to fragment it and lead commentators to dismiss elements that they consider appendiceal. These readings however alert us to cultural conditioning, and the distance that the book itself creates between its redaction and the events it narrates 'in those days…'.

Irigaray's warning about 'what it was possible to think' is apposite: language needs to be understood in its context, as do social relationships. As argued in 1.3.2.3, the meeting between text and reader is a meeting of two subjectivities, both steeped in time, space and history. Their personal and communal history needs to be recognised and differentiated, so that what is held in common, and what is not, can be identified. Without this recognition of the boundaries of each identity, one identity will seek to appropriate the Other, either in overidentification or in an operation of turning the Other into a reverse image of the not-I (Irigaray, 2008, p. 14).

Synchronic readings, in contrast, have highlighted the overall thematic coherence of the book, as a picture of tribes struggling to actualise the unified nation portrayed at the end of the book of Joshua. The narrative is shaped as a downward spiral of increasing chaos and amorality, leading from the unified nation of the covenant at the end of Joshua to the civil war of 20-21 (Chisholm, 2013, p. 30; Block, 1999, p. 37ff). The warnings of the prologue (1-2) against assimilation work themselves out into increasing assimilation to the surrounding culture. As Israel becomes increasingly canaanised, its identity starts to dissolve, it becomes vulnerable to both external and internal threats, and leadership disintegrates, which explains the absence of a judge/deliverer from 19-21.[94] A synchronic reading places the issue of identity at the centre of the book: the identity of a nation, as

[94] For in-depth discussion of the nature of the 'judges', see Butler, 2009, p. xxxvii or Niditch, 2008, pp. 1-3.

played out in the individual lives of its people, and reframed and understood by a later writer/editor. Judges as a whole therefore asks the question: how can 'such a thing' (20.3) happen in Israel? Paying attention to the dynamics of text as a whole enables us to come to a place of confluence between some of the concerns of the writer(s) and that of many subsequent readers, in this shared space of questioning. Irigaray speaks of the 'unifying consciousness' behind the text (1.2.3). Here, with multiple redactional phases, it is impossible to define a single 'author' or 'writer', yet synchronic readings have shown consistently that there is a unifying principle at work in the final version of the text as received. As such, I will speak of the narrator as holding the unifying threads of the narrative, but will refrain from speaking of an 'author'.

4.1.1.3. Towards a coherent, synchronic reading

Having established that a synchronic reading sensitive to historical issues would serve my purpose better, there remains the issue of what gives coherence to a synchronic reading. While the idea of a worsening spiral undergirds most synchronic studies (Block, 1999; Butler, 2009; Klein, 1989; Schneider, 1999; Webb, 1987), all writers argue for deeper coherence through themes, specialised terminology and narrative modes such as irony. Schneider (1999) summarises the arguments for a narrative unified around

> the search for, as well as examination and critique of, differing forms of leadership, the role of women as the barometer of how society functions, the polemic regarding ongoing north/south tensions among the tribes of Israel as well as that related to David and Saul, and Israel's relationship to its deity. These themes are inherent in the narrative, as is made evident by the issues the book addresses, the amount of text dedicated to each topic, the terminology employed, transitions between the various units, and intertextual references tying Judges into the larger Biblical corpus. (p. xiii)

The consensus on the notion of a worsening spiral highlights the move from the idealised leaders of the end of Joshua to the breakdown of leadership of Judges 19-21, characterised by unnamed leaders acting in direct contravention of covenantal obligations. The idea of a spiral rests on the often bandied-about notion of the Deuteronomistic principle, a cycle of sin-punishment-repentance-deliverance (Burney, 1918; Mayes, 2001; Soggin, 1981; Boling, 1975), though most argue that the model is flawed (Greenspahn. 1986; Janzen, 2012; Knoppers & McConville, 2000; McCann, 2002; Mullen, 1993; Polzin, 1980), in that there is no sense of repentance in Judges: Yahweh acts out of compassion in response to Israel's crying, rather than their repentance. The cycle neither starts in the same place nor finds completion in every case. This spiral is

exemplified through a series of interrelated themes in the book: war and violence (Niditch, 2008, p. 4; Embry, 2013, p. 259; Schneider, 1999, p. xv), spirituality or lack thereof (Butler, 2009, p. lxi; Block, 1999, pp. 37-41), leadership (Chisholm, 2013, p. 23; Schneider, 1999, p. xiv), attitudes towards women (Brenner, 1993, p. 13; Klein, 1993a; Schneider, 1999, p. xiv), the construction of a nation (Abadie, 2011, p. 19; Butler, 2009, p. lx) and a polemic around kingship.[95]

It is worth noting the preponderance of female characters in Judges, and in particular named characters (Klein, 1993a, pp. 24-26). Women play the role often expected of them, creating relationships between men, offering doorways in and out of conflict, even critiquing men's wars yet they are not stereotypical or mere narrative foils. Achsah and Deborah depart from expected standards of demure female behaviour. The daughter of Jephthah is not a silent victim. It is well-noted that the deterioration of the nation's spiritual, moral and social state is exemplified in its treatment of women. While the book opens with Achsah, secure in her identity and social position, safe to travel, it closes on the story of the mass abduction and forced marriage of the daughters of Shiloh, unnamed and not even safe enough dancing at a festival of Yahweh. Women *gradually* slip into silence and namelessness.

4.1.2 Judges 19-21 as a textual unit

4.1.2.1. An appendix?

This brief consideration of Judges shows why a synchronic, unified reading is both possible and desirable, though not universally accepted. As a subset to this argument, we must consider the place of 19-21 within the entire book. While Webb (1987; 2012), Block (1999) and Klein (1989) have done much to show how Judges works as a coherent narrative, even those who argue for a unified reading sometimes leave 19-21 out as an appendix, as Amit does (1999, p. 337), as she argues it does not fit thematically with what has come before. In this, she follows a long history of dismissing 19-21 as part of an appendix (Biddle, 2012, p. 11; Boling, 1975, p. 37; Mayes, 1974; Moore, 1985, p. 405; Gray, 1967, p. 210; Milstein, 2016, p. 96; Soggin, 1981, p. 5).

These views mostly rest on a redactional analysis that attributes different sections to different redactors. They usually see 17-21 as of a piece with Judges 1-2, with less Deuteronomistic intrusions, no obvious saviours and bound together by a pro-monarchic

[95] For a detailed account of Judges as political polemic, and the pro-Davidic, anti-Saulide angle, see Amit, 1990; Boling, 1975; Brettler, 2002; Butler, 2009; Frolov, 2012; Mayes, 2001; O'Connell, 1995. For counter-readings, see Butler, 2009; Lanoir, 2005; McCann, 2002; Park, 2015.

refrain (Milstein, 2016, p. 95; Niditch, 2008, p. 13; Soggin, 1981, p. 5). The unity of prologue and epilogue is well observed by Wong (2006, p. 32ff): links in the role of Jebus; oracular consultations with different results; specific military action applied appropriately in the prologue but inappropriately in the epilogue; weeping at Bochim and Bethel; appropriately *vs* inappropriately arranged marriage; links to Joshua. Wong however also sees links with the middle sections that traditional redaction critics seem oblivious to.

Bal (1988a) perceptively critiques the more traditional approach as typical of the tendency of critics to subsume study of a book to a central approach or theme, which then erases the specific voices of individual stories. Predictably, she targets male critics like Boling, who focuses exclusively on men, politics and murders, with a subsidiary 'obsession with chronology' (p. 12). Her critique fits with Irigaray's argument that language and history are constructed from the perspective of a totalitarian male consciousness. The same criticism however could be applied to feminist readings that work on chapter 19 in isolation and use the lens of women's issues to interpret a multi-faceted narrative.

Niditch represents a more contemporary approach to redaction criticism that seeks to listen to polyphony and argues that the prologue/epilogue and central sections allow two different voices to come into contact and offer different options for reflection: 'We are allowed to see two options in polity: one centralized and one decentralised, one state-led, the other kin-based and tribal' (Niditch, 2008, p. 11). A slightly different approach is embodied in O'Connell's argument that the purpose of 17-21 is entrapment, forcing the reader to re-evaluate the entire book in the light of these chapters and their refrain (1995, p. 270).

In contrast to these views are all those who argue for understanding the book as a deteriorating spiral which culminates with 19-21 (Bal, 1988; Klein, 1989; Schneider, 1999; Webb, 1987). Wong (2006, p. 89), in addition, identifies echoes of all the major judges in the story of 19-21: the Levite wooing and abandoning his פילגש echoes Samson wooing and abandoning his wife; the left-handed Benjaminites recall Ehud; we find similar harshness in Israel's dealing with Benjaminites as in Gideon's and Jephthah's stories; the motif of rash oaths and their consequences on young women powerfully echo the Jephthah narrative. These echoes weave a tight net between different parts of the narrative and suggest that the final episode is an indictment of all the judges.

4.1.2.2. Reading 19 and 20-21 together

The next step in a synchronic reading will be to explore the coherence of 19-21 as a unit. Critics like Soggin (1981) often divorce 19 as a 'family, anecdotal account' (p. 281) from the account of the civil war as an important political account. This lack of integration leads to the frequent occlusion of women's perspectives, and failing to dwell on the fate of the women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh. At the other end of the scale, feminist critics like Bal (1993; 1988a) or Trible (2002) largely isolate the story of the פילגש from the wider political narrative, which prevents reflection on broader social and political dynamics, and the concurrent violence to male identity and personhood (see Chapter 5). Reading the three chapters together and identifying key motifs and structural patterns enables each narrative to offer a commentary on the other, and readers to catch a glimpse of an implicit, but definite, narratorial judgement.

The women of Jabesh-Gilead

Uniting features in 19-21 work at the level of themes (words and motifs), structure and with the use of the refrain. Both narratives fail to name any active character. The פילגש is נערה (19.3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9), like the girls of Jabesh-Gilead (21.12). The parallel invites readers to ask pointed questions; the girls of Jabesh-Gilead are all virgins, the פילגש was clearly not. Sexualised vocabulary echoes between 19-21, with ידע as euphemism for sexual activity in 19.22, 25 and 21.11, 12. It is difficult not to read the story of the brutalised פילגש into the treatment of the girls of Jabesh-Gilead. Equally, whilst on initial reading the woman of 19 may be seen as transgressing sexual norms (זנה), the parallel prompts readers to go back to 19 in light of the characterisation of the girls of Jabesh-Gilead. Common vocabulary invites us to read these stories together as parallel stories of the brutalisation and abuse of very young women.

The daughters of Shiloh

With regards to the girls of Shiloh, parallels with the פילגש are not as marked, though the interruption of a happy scene, not drinking, but set in a vineyard, by violence and disaster visited upon women, is obvious. The speech of the elders in 21.20 repeats themes and vocabulary from chapter 20. The use of ארב, lying in wait, in 21.20, is eerily reminiscent of the attack upon Gibeah in 20.29, 33, 36, 37, 38, and casts the whole episode as a parody of the violent retribution of chapter 20. Life is reversed, the Benjaminites are lying in wait,

supposedly on the right side of the law this time, against unsuspecting victims: women. The underlying irony is that they justify their actions by saying they are not taking women through war or battle, yet the vocabulary and parallels suggest otherwise.

The most tragic feature of the elders' speech is probably their planning of what to say to brothers and fathers who will come to protest: reasoning that they have no reason to protest. The elders are preventing fathers and brothers from acting as protectors of the women, as they should within their cultural identity. So just as the Levite put the woman under his protection out to be harmed, just as the old man was willing to throw out his daughter, the elders willingly sacrifice women; and as the Levite did not protect the פילגש, the fathers and brothers of the women of Shiloh will not be able to protect their daughters.

Finally, Shiloh lies in Ephraim: the echo of the Levite's provenance connects the beginning and end of the story. Therefore, as Ackerman (1998) argues, 'A story that begins by condemning Benjamin's assault of an Ephraimite's woman concludes by condoning the Benjaminites' ravaging of the Ephraimites' women' (p. 254).

פילגש and battle

In addition to these parallels, Berman (2004, p. 55) argues that the battle of Judges 20.40-48 functions as 'a metaphor analogy to the rape of the פילגש'. In 20.41, 'disaster/evil (הרעה) had overtaken them', echoes the old man's words in 19.23, as well as the charge to the tribes, 'what is this evil (הרעה הזאת) thing that has happened among you?', and the demand to hand over wrongdoers, that we may 'stamp out the evil from Israel.' As the expression in 20.41 is singular in the corpus of battle reports, the semantic parallel is significant. In 19, הרעב represents moral evil; in 20, it is morally neutral. However, the disaster of 20 is a result of the evil of 19. Read together therefore, the two episodes suggest that the evil of 20 is Benjamin's own evil catching up with them. Berman highlights another significant parallels: the Benjaminites being pursued back to Gibeah meet their death at the door of their own city, just as the פילגש collapsed on the entrance to the house.

Motifs

At the level of overall themes, unity is also obvious. A series of tensions in Israelite society are played out in both private and public realms, about gender, family relationships, tribal

identity versus national identity, what justice means (Niditch, 2008, p. 190). Men recurrently eat, drink and make merry to the point of disaster; Israel does not stop with military victory but slaughters everyone; Benjamin is so heady from its first two days' victory they blithely walk into an ambush; the elders of Israel do not stop to think about whether four hundred women is enough to stem extinction. The patterns is one of consistent excess: excessive hospitality, excessive inhospitality, excessive violence, excessive sexuality, excessive desire.

Parallels and echoes therefore set up a strong sense of unity of the whole narrative, and invite the readers to read the two stories together. The story of an individual woman becomes the story of a nation. As the פילגש will be torn apart, so will the nation. Her body effectively embodies the fate of Israel, rather than just exemplifying the consequences of the breakdown of social and ethical norms.

The refrain: בימים ההם אין מלך בישראל איש הישר בעיניו יעשה

Moving beyond unity of theme and motif, a synchronic reading of Judges is held together through the use of the refrain. The refrain echoes the opening chapters of Judges, and marks them out as an illustration of life before the monarchy. The refrain on its own does not lend itself to easy interpretation. Is this a pro-monarchist polemic, as Frolov (2012, p. 322), would argue (he contends that the Gibeah affair would have been less likely to occur with a king, and dealt with swiftly if there had been)? Is this a comment on what happens in a vacuum of leadership, whether monarchical or not (Butler, 2009, p. 417)? Is it a comment on Israel's failure to honour Yahweh as king (Wénin, 2013, p. 197)? Or is it preparation for the failure of kingship that fails to take Yahweh as real king?

Far from isolating the prologue/epilogue from the rest of the book, the refrain can be seen as a vehicle for unity across it as a conscious counterpoint to 'the Israelites did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh' (Wong, 2006, p. 196). In this sense, the refrain draws the book together and allows 19-21 to function as an integral conclusion. The two refrains, taken together, give a clue towards interpretation: איש parallels ישראל, and מלך parallels יהוה, which suggests that the main drive of the book is not primarily political but spiritual, in keeping with its classification in the Former Prophets: a warning about Israel's life when turning away from Yahweh.

4.1.3 The history of interpretation

The interpretation of Judges 19-21 has attracted very diverse conclusions. Examining the history of interpretation more closely can enable us to identify some of the cultural and historical assumptions underlying common readings of the text, reader responses throughout history, and what has been construed as the grain of the text. Many feminist readings argue they are reading against the grain; this may be so, but in order to read against the grain, one needs to define what the grain is, and whether this grain actually pertains to the text itself, or to interpretations that have grown attached to it (1.3.2.3 and 1.2.1).

4.1.3.1. A brief history of the interpretation of 19-21

This history shows that Judges 19-21 has troubled readers from an early stage. Ancient readers were troubled by the idea of homosexual rape, and often wrote it out in retellings and glosses on the story, as we see in Josephus, Pseudo-Philo and Ramban (Gunn, 2005, p. 248). Ancient Talmudic sources look dimly on the men of Gibeah and see their deaths as fitting punishment for the men's crimes (Gunn, 2005, p. 248). Ancient Jewish sources tend to point out details that later shaped the focus on Judges as an anti-Saulide polemic (with Saul as one of the surviving Benjaminites). Classical Jewish sources tended to sanitise the story by emending זנה (be unfaithful) to זנחה (got angry), as per LXX, and fault the husband for treating the פילגש so harshly that she leaves (Gunn, 2005, p. 249). This said, classic rabbinic exegesis largely concentrates on the meeting of the tribes and the political dimension of Israel coming together (Thompson, 2001, p. 188).

Most patristic writers show an equal unease with the story of Judges 19 and its unfolding consequences, and either pass over the passage quickly or ignore it altogether (Schroeder, 2007a, pp. 101-152). Ambrose followed Josephus in removing any hint of adultery and painting the Levite as model husband and the civil war as an example of virtue from persevering Israel (Franke, 2005, p. 169). Here we have the seeds of interpretations that will endure: a tendency to either see the פילגש as 'blameless' in order to condemn the men of Gibeah (because, implicitly, had she been unfaithful, this would be seen as justifying her ultimate fate); a disregard for the woman's social placement as neither wife nor slave; determination to exonerate the Levite from wrongdoing (because it is difficult to have a hero-less story, or to find a 'model' to follow without his example), and the tendency to see Israel as acting well in response to the Gibeahites' actions (Hamley, 2015). From Jerome until the Middle Ages, any hint of adultery is omitted from the

Vulgate, and the few commentators who consider the story focus on homosexual rape as a deep violation against nature (Schroeder, 2007a, p. 116). Very few medieval commentators pay attention to the passage, but those who do find it problematic. Rape is always condemned there, but there is a mixed assessment of the Levite and his host. Puzzlement is expressed at Israel's double defeat and their unwise vows (Gunn, 2005, p. 244).

The regain of interest in the Hebrew text speared by the Reformers in the 16th century led to a return to the idea of punishment of a woman of questionable morals. Commentaries on 19-21 are striking in their efforts to exonerate the Levite. Bucer is typical of Reformation commentators, arguing that the woman is guilty as an adulteress and when her husband and father fail to punish her, she meets divine punishment instead. He argues, along with Vermigli, that rape is a particularly appropriate punishment for an adulteress (Schroeder, 2007a, p. 128). The Reformers' hard line finds its way into later criticism in the ambivalence about the translation of זנה, as if the very notion of sexual transgression thereby automatically makes her less of a victim, and jeopardises the possibility of condemning rape (Hamley, 2015).

Following the Reformation, early modern commentators (Milton, Tyndale) largely go with MT and speak harshly of the woman's adultery whilst exonerating the Levite of any blame (Gunn, 2005, p. 251). The Benjaminite war sparked interest in the 18th century as a basis of arguments for just war (Gunn, 2005, p. 262ff), whilst the Shiloh story caught the imagination of writers and artists for its echoes of ancient myths and the story of the Sabines. It is only the incipient campaign for women's rights that signalled a change of attitude towards the פילגש, with the work of Cady Stanton, Miller and Ormerod (Gunn, 2005, p. 251).

Early form critics dealt with the unease of the chapters by largely dismissing it and emending the text to make it more acceptable. Noth and Richter set the tone in classifying 1 and 17-21 as additions worth little attention (Webb, 2012, p. 22), an option followed by major later critics such as Boling (1975) and Soggin (1981). Soggin summarises the trend of a century:

> Now there can be no doubt that the first of the two narratives seems somewhat irrelevant from the point of view of the historian and is, rather, a literary 'novel'; furthermore, the narrator has drawn considerably on Gen. 19, but without much coherence. (p. 282)

None of these commentators consider literary unity, progression of themes and motifs throughout the book, but generally seem to consider that stories about women are a distraction from the real business of the narrative, i.e. the political story of leadership and warfare.

More recent work, particularly in the light of feminist criticism (Bal 1988a, 1993, 1999; Fewell, 1987; Fuchs, 2008a, 2008b; Trible, 2002), has re-focused on the end of the book and its shocking narrative, with a plethora of 'against the grain' interpretations, such as Ryan's (2007, p. 167) who argues that the point of 19-21 is to show that Yahweh himself is the oppressor who stands by and does nothing. The increasing prominence of literary and integrated readings (Block, 1999; Klein, 1989; Schneider, 1999; Webb, 1987, 2012) has restored the ending of Judges as a legitimate and important part of the book, as seen in 4.1.1.4.

4.1.3.2. Sanitising a difficult story

At this point, it is worth noting some fairly consistent features of the way 19-21 have been approached over time. First, the story has been shocking enough, from an early point, that commentators have felt the need to change or rationalise some of its features, from the rejection of MT to seeking to explain difficult features through an appeal to culture and mythological status (e.g. Shiloh and Jabesh Gilead as an accepted ancient method of finding a wife: see Butler, 2009, p. 464; Hepner, 2010; Southwood, 2017). Commentators and translations have often removed the uncomfortable ambiguities of the MT. So, for instance, in MT, we are not told when the פילגש dies, hence we do not know who is guilty of her murder: the men of Gibeah, or the Levite who dismembers her, possibly alive. However most commentators either *assume* she is dead already, or follow LXX which adds, 'for she was dead' to 19.28 (Chapter 3 footnote 45).

Another frequent feature is the link between adultery and a perceived punishment, with commentators either dismissing the possibility of the פילגש committing adultery because she would therefore not be blameless, or making an argument for poetic justice (Hamley, 2015). Segal (2012) exemplifies the tendency by arguing that having the פילגש commit adultery is explaining her death 'too neatly' (p. 102). One may wonder why one should follow from the other, unless perhaps one assumes a lesser level of morality and ethics in the ancient world, a questionable strategy.

By far the most salient aspect of interpretation over the centuries has been the tendency to focus the story through the lens of politics and the affairs of men. The effect is that it neatly occludes the reality of women's lives and prevents a discussion of ethical and moral norms of behaviour for gender relations. Soggin (1981) beautifully captured this perspective:

> Now there can be no doubt that the first of the two narratives seems somewhat irrelevant from the point of view of the historian and is, rather, a literary 'novel' (…) On the other hand, the passage about the civil war could be historically important (…) the outrage at Gibeah will have simply had the function of concealing the political motives inherent in the event and of translating it into a mere question of crime and punishment: facts of this kind do not cause war, but they can justify it on an ethical level. (p. 282)

His approach is echoed by Moore (1985, p. 402), who entitles the 19-21 section, 'The tribe of Benjamin is nearly exterminated by the other Israelites', and Boling, who sees the epilogue as a 'comic finale' (1975, p. 37), though exactly what is comical about the story is rather unclear. Others concentrate on the story as evidence of a pro-monarchic, pro-Judah and anti-Saulide polemic in Judges meant to work proleptically in the canon, and see the story of the פילגש as no more than a forward-looking allusion to Saul's פילגש and dismembering the oxen in Samuel (O'Connell, 1995; Milstein, 2016). This focus on political/historical coherence and issues thereby systematically erases women (Bal, 1988a, p. 6).

4.1.3.3. Occluding a difficult story

The combined effect of these multiple processes of sanitisation is that the story of women and violence against them is occluded from interpretation, despite being salient in the text. Until the advent of feminist and literary commentaries, few commentators pondered the actions of the Levite, and often cast him in the role of victim, in a search for heroes and models in the text. Likewise, the behaviour of the old man was seldom examined, and usually described as generous hospitality that seeks to protect his guests (Butler, 1999, p. lxxviii). Yet do laws of hospitality not apply to all guests? Women here seem irrelevant in judging the quality of hospitality and relationships between men. When the threat to the travellers is described, a focus on the horror of (threatened) male rape and its utter unthinkability in the Ancient World often shifts attention away from female victims.

The quasi-absence of reflection on the old man's daughter and her threatened rape, and the ambivalent treatment of chapter 21 in many commentators are equally striking. More

has been made of the story of the women of Shiloh than of the women of Jabesh-Gilead, maybe because their fate is easier to rationalise, through an appeal to wine festivals and alleged traditions of wife-stealing (Boling, 1975; Gnuse, 2007; Hepner, 2010; Southwood, 2017). At its extreme, the approach yields the following assessment: 'the elders of Israel allow the Benjaminites to seize Israelite girls in a virtual, but benign, form of rape in the vineyards of Shiloh' (Hepner, 2010, p. 821). The complete erasure of the women's perspective is sealed with describing any form of rape as 'virtual' and 'benign'.

Some critics have clearly struggled with the sense that a terrible story has been told, yet still affirmed a perspective that denies the importance of women's experience. And so Boling (1975), despite mentioning that the פילגש has been erased or forgotten twice in the footnotes (p. 274), nevertheless states, 'it's a man's world' and affirms that the story only has value when set alongside what follows, after which he proceeds to replicate the erasure of the story of the פילגש by focusing exclusively on the civil war. Some, like Soggin (1981, p. 280), even argue that the text does not describe rape, by disputing the meaning of ענה. Others exclude her by turning her into a figment of the writer's imagination, whose story diverts attention from what actually matters: the political story (Brettler, 2002, p. 91).

The occlusion of rape is significant in itself, as a woeful failure to take the whole text seriously, but it also prevents those commentators from seeing the crucial importance of such a story being told, and told in a *sacred* text: both in terms of the risk of unwitting reinforcement of abusive attitudes (Kirk-Duggan, 2013, p. 84), and in preventing the crucial task of reading women's stories as part of the bigger divine story. A lack of attention to detail and narrative judgement further impairs the ability to consider the function of 'texts of terror' told in sacred texts.

4.1.4. Judges as Sacred Text

Here, it is worth reflecting on the nature of Judges as *sacred* text, rather than as *any* text. The fact that the genre of Judges is, first and foremost, sacred text, shapes its interpretation and the way in which it is read: whether the category of sacred text is considered as primary, or rejected as irrelevant (2.2.7). Judges may show little overt theologising, yet it was placed, at some point, within a collection of texts considered sacred, which shapes and theologises its meaning. As sacred text, Judges is fundamentally concerned with the shaping of religious identity and its working out through social and political practices. Hence my interest in 19-21: what does it mean for men and women

today to read Judges 19-21 as a sacred text? What is the significance of a story of unspeakable abuse being told within a story of cosmic significance,[96] at least in the mind of many of its readers?

Irigaray speaks of sacred texts rather loosely, often under the heading of 'myths and foundational stories' (1987a; 1998). She argues that the value of such stories/texts lies partly in their constituting social norms (1998, p. 82). Her approach is subtle and careful, and she argues one needs to look not just at the texts themselves, but at how they may have been (mis)interpreted in ways that allow those (mis)interpretations to reinforce established prejudices and attitudes (2.2.7 and 2.3.1.2). Questions that shape my reading therefore include: what kind of social norms does Judges 19-21 constitute? What kind of gender relationships are established and encouraged? How does the text interact with today's social norms and gender relations?

Irigaray further speaks of the place of God and God-talk as crucial to giving coherence to a narrative of identity, and creating the possibility of a horizon that ensures passage between past and future, making a bridge of a present that remembers (1987a, p. 79). Sacred texts are god-talk by definition; texts that ensure that a past is remembered for the sake of the construction of a present and future self. Reading Judges as sacred is therefore not simply about reading a text about the past: reading the story of the פילגש '*in memoriam*', as many feminists do (Trible, 2002; Fiorenza, 1992) is not entirely faithful to the notion of sacred text. Rather, reading this text in a community of faith shapes the present, and has shaped a succession of presents over time. Analysing Judges 19-21 as a sacred text therefore involves a simultaneous consideration of a bridge between reader and text today, and different bridges across history.

Considering Judges as sacred text presents us with an immediate problem: there is comparatively little explicit theologising of story and experience in the text (Biddle, 2012, p. 8), with little obvious narratorial intrusion. Placement within the canon in itself theologises the book however, something I will explore in 4.3.3. Furthermore, the genre of narrative means that interpretation relies heavily on an analysis of literary form and dynamics in the theologising process. I will mostly concentrate on the theological

[96] I will not go into a debate on whether Scripture offers a metanarrative at this point, or whether it should be read as such. My interest, writing as both priest and scholar, is on how this story interacts with the practice of reading Scripture as metanarrative as we find it in churches across the world – albeit the notion of metanarrative functions very differently in different contexts, and is hotly contested in some.

portrayal of difference. This applies to the relationship between self and other at various levels: gender, national identity and ethnicity. Does the text theologise difference and how we relate to difference? The question is not easily answered. For instance, with the question of difference from the 'alien': Judges 19 sets up a complex picture of who is the alien sojourning where (the Levite, the פילגש, the old man), and who behaves like an alien (the men of Gibeah) even though they are not. Moving on to 20-21, the ambiguity surrounding who Israel is and isn't increases, with shifts between which tribes and cities are in or out, treated as aliens, and whether the behaviour of Israel is at all distinguishable from the Canaanites around them (5.1.1.2). The picture of gender difference is equally complex and tied to the interpretation of literary dynamics: whether we read characters as exemplars, whether we see their behaviour as validated by the narrator or not, will define how gender difference is read and theologised. In addition, Irigaray would question the theological implications of God being portrayed as male, and the impact of gendering God on male and female identity (5.1.1.3).

At this point we also need to take Irigaray's point about the constraints of language as defining the reality that is possible to see or express; in a world where men control access to discourse and the production of sacred texts, what space is there for women to develop subjectivity? What freedom is there for the writer to express something that his very language precludes, such as a different concept of God with respect to gender? Identifying the boundaries within which the writer(s) is working will be crucial, as well as identifying what may (or may not) come through the gaps within the text, what lies beyond conscious expression within language.

Here, for the interpreter working within a faith tradition, lies the risk of theologising in line with their own presupposition and grammar of reality; Irigaray points to the tendency to use divine command to reinforce what 'I' already believe or know (1974, p. 264) in a way which reinforces the ability of the subject to legislate about what is outside the self. Irigaray therefore highlights the perils of religious interpretation, yet without endorsing so-called neutral or objective perspectives as an alternative, or dismissing the possibility of interpretation (1985, p. 7). This takes us back to Irigaray's encouragement to understand the contingency of humanity. As an interpreter, one can open a window onto the text, but never claim to know or understand its totality. The Irigarayan reading I propose to do can therefore reveal areas often left in shadow, and open new windows for interpretation, but cannot claim to be exhaustive or definitive. It will, however, be a

theological reading of Judges 19-21, a reading that endeavours to understand how the text has functioned, functions and could function as a sacred text.

4.2. In time and space: situatedness

Exploring the placement of Judges 19-21 within an overall Scriptural context has helped towards an understanding of 19-21 as situated within time, space and corporate memory and interpretation. Irigaray encourages careful readers to move into an act of psychoanalytical deconstruction (1.3.2 and 1.3.3): listening to the unconscious of the text, its processes of repression, the language that structures its representations, the principles that determine its truth and value judgements. This will not be a symbolic interpretation of everything, as some have mistakenly read Irigaray (2.3.2), but rather a questioning of the grammar of discourse, its laws, its imaginary configurations, its metaphorical networks, and, of course, what is not articulated: its silences. Listening to this grammar will in turn reveal some of the boundaries of the text, what could be thought or not thought, what possible interpretations may be possible, and help assess different voices within the constraints of their environment. This will therefore question history, society and culture, and carefully analyse how the text is woven together. Such an analysis does not presuppose culture as a coherent whole but rather as 'a complex and conflicting set of symbolic domains' (Eilberg-Schwartz, 1994, p. 6). Hence, while religion, family, ethnicity are interrelated, they will not fit easily into one larger, harmonious system, and analytical deconstruction will help reveal some of the faultlines between competing values and concepts that change and evolve over time and space, between individuals and groups.

First, we must uncover what is assumed as 'normal' and how it is disrupted, what the equilibrium may be and how it is destroyed, as Irigaray does in her analysis of Antigone (2013). In Judges 19-21, gaining an understanding of how chapter 19 disrupts and disturbs the equilibrium of the tribes is crucial; so is an understanding of how the 'breach in the tribes' of 21 is such a disruption of the accepted balance that the solution proposed is deemed acceptable. Whilst no simple relationship can be assumed between text and historical context (Meyers, 1999, p. 33), insights from historical and cultural studies can help illuminate some of its aspects and minimise the tendency to read modern concepts and the grammar of discourse underlying them back into ancient texts.

The analysis of family violence in 19 needs to be considered as part of a wider cultural system rather than simply subsumed under modern notions of patriarchy (Pilch, 1997). Meyers (1999, p. 36) argues that in the agrarian framework of Judges, people were not

seen as autonomous entities but rather experienced identity relationally. As everyone was needed for survival, it is unlikely that one group (women) was systematically disparaged. Gender-based tasks ensured the development of expertise and efficiency. Power lay at the level of the household, which led to different relationships than in a hierarchical (monarchic) society and a blurring of the public/private distinction. Meyer's views are controversial, and I do not adopt them fully here: Judges may be agrarian in part, but it lies at the juncture between two political and social systems, at a time of transition, when a dispersed household-based system is morphing into a tribal system with an embryonic national identity. Furthermore, the text may have been shaped by different underlying cultures at different stages of redaction. Still, Meyers reminds us that concepts such as patriarchy cannot simply be applied retrospectively. Stone (1996, p. 30) highlights the problem from a different but equally crucial angle and points out that sexual actions function as semiotic acts in narratives, without the narrative giving us a full explanation of their meaning. In Judges 19, the Levite interprets what the men of Gibeah want. For us to interpret the text and its range of meanings, we make assumptions about the nature of the sexual act evoked, and therefore need ethnographic information as well as an awareness of our own presuppositions. We need to discern which narrative gaps may be fillable through cultural knowledge, versus deliberate ambiguity (4.4.1.2).

4.2.1. Social organisation of the nation

4.2.1.1. Political organisation

Politically the tribes appear organised in a loose federation, in line with the rest of Judges and its shifting configurations of tribes gathered under various leaders. The tribes are brought together for the first time since chapter 1 in chapter 20, by an event that threatens the very notion of what 'Israel' is. 'Israel' is used as a shorthand for a group of tribes united around the idea of a common past and a common God. The nature of government and tribal and national organisation is unclear (Block, 1999, p. 33): after the centralising leadership of Joshua, power seems to have passed to tribal leaders and the 'elders of the congregation' (21.16). Leadership of each tribe is not defined precisely, with a chequered picture of judicial leaders, a king, lords of city states and military leaders. The contours of each tribe fluctuate across the book, yet tribes are loosely connected around an idea of who Israel is and therefore what can or cannot be done in Israel.

Boling (1975) helpfully argues that 'the ancient tribe was a political structure, for which genealogy and kinship terminology provided a sort of narrative glue' (p. 15). Judges in

general and 19-21 in particular seem to bear his statement out, which shows why the disruption of kinship ties in 19 causes such disruption that 20-21 becomes possible.

4.2.1.2. The rule of law

The question of law sheds interesting light on socio-political organisation. Law forms an explicit 'grammar' for a society, yet one that creates discrepancy between the ideal and lived reality. By its very nature, law assumes that the ideal will not be fulfilled. The question then is, what ideal was envisaged, what 'normal' is lived with, what 'abnormal' is condemned, and what 'abnormal' is so disruptive that the normal rule of law cannot deal with it. Judges follows legal texts so there is an implicit canonical encouragement to bear the Law in mind whilst dealing with narrative. The relationship between legal and narrative texts is problematic however. Narrative texts usually present lax (or gracious?) responses to law-breaking compared to punishments prescribed in Leviticus or Deuteronomy. Considering them together does not presuppose that laws were applied, but that the Law can offer an ethical commentary on the narrative.

Laws matter, even if not applied, as evidence of the power of speech in instituting social order by creating a guiding picture and framework for behaviour and identity. Laws also dictate concepts of perpetrator and victim. Yet notions of who is a victim are predicated on much wider schemas than those explicitly embodied in law, but have to do with culturally-conditioned notions of the individual and their relationship to the collective, ideas relative to levels of power and influence, and authority and power structures. Judges 19-21 does not explicitly interact with the legal framework of the Old Testament, but contains strong allusions to two sets of legal texts. The strength of allusions to Deuteronomy 22 on the one hand, and 13 and 19 on the other, suggests a deliberate ethical commentary by the narrator, prompting readers to pass judgement on events depicted.

Deuteronomy 22.13-21

Deuteronomy 22.13-21 considers the case of a new wife being accused of harlotry (זנה), and her father (אבי הנערה) defending her. The latter semantic link, an unusual expression used repeatedly in 19, is striking (Leeb, 2000). Semantic parallels include פתח בית (the entrance of the house) and her dying there alone at the hands of the men of the city, נבלה being committed, and burning רעה (evil) from the midst of Israel. Reeder (2012, pp. 1-2) argues that these texts, accused of promoting family violence, are about identifying the

'enemy within' (p. 2), those whose loyalty to the basic building blocks of Israelite society wavers, who therefore threaten the nation as much as those attacking it from without. Several features are noteworthy: the presumption of innocence of the daughter; the presumption that her parents will defend her (the means to do so is easy to contrive should parents want to save a guilty child); clear punishment threatens men seeking to mistreat their spouses. In contrast, Judges 19 presents a picture of a girl who may well be guilty, though one has to ask whether זנה (19.2) represents focalization through the Levite's eyes and his accusation of her, rather than a statement of fact. She then goes to her father's house, where, according to Deuteronomy, she should expect her father to defend her (or possibly, condemn her). Instead, she finds indifference and eagerness to hand her back to the man to whom she is not wife but פילגש. Her husband then has either mistreated her, or failed to hold her accountable. Without proper evidence being asked for, as demanded in Deuteronomy, she is eventually handed over to a mob of men 'from the town' (as in Deut. 22.21), and falls before the entrance of the house. The Levite is never held accountable either. The entire episode is cast as a travesty of the judicial process of Deut. 22 (Hepner, 2012, p. 823) which suggests a withering indictment of all characters involved in the story.

Deuteronomy 13 and 19

The second intertextual parallel that strikes a careful reader echoes Deuteronomy 19 (laws regarding murder and false witness) and Deuteronomy 13.13-16 (the apostate town). Deuteronomy 19 introduces the difference between manslaughter (accidental) and murder (following pre-existing enmity), and commands the death penalty for murderers. It prescribes the conditions under which judgements must be made: 'a single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime' (19.15), 'the judges shall make a thorough enquiry' (19.18), and punishment of false witnesses (19.19); then follows, 'so you shall burn the evil in your midst', as in Deut. 22.21 and Judges 20.13. The contrast with Judges is stark. The Levite is a single witness to the crime of Gibeah. His retelling distorts the story, and implicates far more than the original group of men. The elders of Israel half-heartedly investigate, but when met with refusal from Benjamin, they hasten to summary judgement. The men of Benjamin refuse to hand over culprits, *contra* Deut. 19.12. When the people set out to 'burn the evil in their midst', it is unclear that their target is the one specified in the due process of Deuteronomy 19. Again, the narrator invites readers to see Israel as failing to uphold the very laws that undergird its identity.

The trend matches the parallel with 13.12-18. There, the only provision for חרם to be conducted against Israel itself is set out. When men of a town (בני־בליעל, as in Judges 19.22) lead the whole town into idolatry, a thorough investigation is made and if proven guilty, the entire town is put to the sword, all spoils are burnt, and it should lie in ruins forever. Some critics highlight the parallels between the texts, and see Benjamin as guilty, hence deserving punishment (Edenburg, 2016, p. 134; Lanoir, 2005, p. 209; O'Connell, 1995, p. 265). Careful reading of both passages however reveals a more disturbing picture. Gibeah, Benjamin as a whole, and Jabesh-Gilead are, indeed, subject to חרם.

None of them however were guilty of leading others into apostasy, however horrendous their crimes, therefore the legal context does not apply, though response is rationalised through a sense that what Benjamin and Jabesh Gilead have done, places them outside of the covenant as surely as idolatry. Judges 20-21 elevates the crimes of a band of 'worthless fellows' to the same level as idolatry, and the refusal of Jabesh-Gilead to participate in a questionable war to an act of treason that equally posits them as an 'enemy within', one no longer part of 'Israel' but Other. No thorough investigation is conducted. The judgement of Deut. 13 on a *city* is widened to an entire tribe. In Jabesh-Gilead, marriageable women are rescued, in direct contravention of the laws of חרם, just as four hundred Benjaminites are spared. Finally, the Benjaminite cities are rebuilt, whereas Deuteronomy 13 proscribes it. Overall, the picture is that of a people who have gone their own way, carried out disproportionate and unlawful action against one of their own, and failed to abide by any of the foundational processes set out in law. The indictment is searing.

Legal matters: a post-script

It is worth noting Irigaray's concern that in most societies, there are few laws actively protecting women *as women*, rather than as a sub-section of the 'rights of men' (1987a, p. 146). As such, women are usually sacrificed to the men around them and few laws protect women against private violence or involuntary pregnancy. Judges 19-21 appears to fit Irigaray's description. Bird (1997, p. 30) argues that woman is a legal non-person in the Old Testament, and only becomes visible in law as a dependent and inferior. Woman only comes into view when males are lacking (no heir), when they need specific protection by men (widows), when sexual offences involve them, or their gender means a differentiated state is legislated for (slave brides, captive brides, mothers, sorceresses). Bird's argument is questionable, in that the very fact that gender specific laws are made, however

inadequate, suggests that women are legal persons in some form. Berquist (2002) seems closer to the mark:

> The whole body can extend beyond the individual to encompass the sexually bonded pair, (…) thus actions that break them apart are wrong, since the body should be kept whole. In much of the legal tradition, the man's body subsumes the woman's, casting her as a legal extension of the man's body. (p. 59)

Berquist captures something of the legal status of women as existing in law through their relationship to the men whose personhood defines the shape of those laws in the first place.

The question of law matters in identifying and naming what has happened to the woman of Judges 19. Are the men of Gibeah guilty of 'rape', or of 'stealing another man's property' (though the Levite offered her), or of murder (if they did indeed kill her)? It is unclear, in the body of legal texts of the Old Testament, that a clear concept of rape exists in any way distinct from the notion of misusing another man's property (see 5.3). Kawashima (2011) notes the difficulty of reading the modern legal concept of rape back into the story of Judges 19-21:

> If the modern concept of forcible rape is defined as a nonconsensual sexual encounter in which the 'object' of the encounter is also its 'victim'—the one whose rights have been violated—then there was no such thing as forcible rape in biblical Israel's legal system. Biblical law, inasmuch as one might posit a coherent view on this matter, does recognize the possibility of a forcible sexual encounter, but it defines it as a particular case of the more general crime of illicit sex, and identifies the 'victim' of this crime as the father or husband whose claims over the 'object' of the crime—daughter or wife—have been 'violated'. (p. 2)

Just because codified laws do not recognise a victim's trauma however does not mean the culture as a whole fails to do so (Feinstein, 2014, p. 80). There are Biblical texts that portray trauma, such as the story of Tamar and Amnon. The heartrending picture of the פילגש at the door, hands reaching out for safety, in itself suggests an acknowledgement of her victimisation as a person, regardless of legal definitions. Yet, unlike with matters above, there is no legal intertext to offer implicit comment. There are no obvious laws protecting women that are alluded to, no laws 'appropriate to her genre' (Irigaray, 1987a, p. 146ff), and whatever laws or practices there are, are ignored in Judges 19-21.

4.2.2. Interpersonal relations

The question of laws and their bearing on women's lives cannot be abstracted from the wider social context; identical laws have differential impact depending on the wider social context. Data from both text and what we know of the ethnographic context can help us piece together some of the background against which the story is told, and undergird my Irigarayan identity analysis in Chapter 5.

4.2.2.1. Male/female relationships

Judges 19 is interesting for the glimpse it offers of gender relationships in the domestic sphere. While it pertains to one couple, the parallels with 20-21 explored earlier suggest a correspondence between the individual and the collective. The majority of interactions mark out the פילגש as either inferior, or at least not belonging to the world of men. She is absent from scenes of hospitality in both her father's and the old man's house, though she would likely have participated in the preparation and serving of food for the men. Bombach (1999) argues that this shows a reversal of the traditional public/private spheres with the woman exiled from the safe private space (p. 93). I disagree, in that the scene with both father and old man are subsets of the public, male domain; the incursion into the world of the home is not so much a reversal as an invasion of the unsafe public world into all areas of life. The פילגש is regularly excluded from conversation between men: the Levite and his servant make travel plans to which she does not contribute; the old man uses singular verbs in inviting the Levite back to his house, ignoring both servant and פילגש; in the end even her ordeal becomes subsidiary to the greater crime of attempted murder against the Levite in his dubious speech to the tribes (20.4-7). Her social position seems to be below even animals, as the Levite takes his donkeys (first) and פילגש (second) in 19.10-12.

Judges 21 opens another window onto gender relations. The dilemma faced by Israel is rooted in the inevitability of marriage and the need to have children; male genealogies are paramount, so Benjamin needs to reproduce. However, *all* the remaining Benjaminites *must* have wives (surely a few of them marrying would be enough to ensure the survival of the tribe). This may be a reflection of the individual need for genealogies and continuing the name of the Father (Irigaray, 1987a, p. 146; 1990a, p. 72; 1999a, p. 140; 2013, p. 128). This is set as a primary, overarching principle to which all others become subsidiary, such as how to 'acquire' wives, the rights of other men (fathers and brothers), relationships between tribes. Marrying within Israel is kept as a primary principle, on an

equal basis with that of men *needing* to marry. This ensures not just the preservation of male genealogy, but the preservation of a *pure* genealogy, and bridges the link between individual and tribe identity.

There is some debate as to how far the text promotes patriarchy or simply witnesses to it. Aschkenasy (1986) argues that what appears patriarchal does not necessarily arise out of voluntary oppression or a concept of women as inferior, but as a by-product of a society within which physical strength was key to survival (p. 109). In a society where all were needed to survive, and male physical strength was essential for protection, marriage was not a private matter. Rather, it is about relationships between households, clans and tribes that can ensure prosperity and safety for the greatest number of people (Meyers, 2013, p. 145). Where marriage is threatened, the safety and prosperity of the household, and, by extension, the clan and tribe is also at risk.[97] Whilst Meyers is right about the public nature of marriage, it is not sufficient to explain why women's sexuality and relationships are guarded and contained, the legal system designed to protect male interests and genealogies, and households organised around a male head, rather than a female head, or, indeed, a couple.

Judges 19 showcases the men's full determination of women's sexuality, the overarching rights of the husband, the bargaining between husband and father, and the peddling of women's sexuality to protect men. Aschkenasy translates this as turning women into 'chattel', and a critique of the fear of women's sexuality reminiscent of Irigaray's (1.3.1.1):

> This resulted in a situation where the woman's sexuality was both guarded and exploited, and where she was often seen as tyrannized by her own anatomy, who had to pay the price not only for her own excesses but for those she may have aroused in the male. (Aschkenasy, 1986, p. 110)

Bird (1997, p. 38-50) and Frymer-Kensky (1992, p. 121) disagree, because women are not simply narrative foils, property, or lacking in subjectivity in the wider Biblical narrative. Women did have rights despite their subordination: wives could not be bought, sold or divorced without substantial cause (Bird, 1997, p. 38), though their status in their family of origin however often defined their status as wives, and it is fair to wonder how far the fate of the פילגש was determined by her status as a פילגש (Hamley, forthcoming). Women in the Old Testament are described as 'intelligent, strong-willed, capable and endowed

[97] For a fuller exploration of concepts of Old Testament family and how loyalty functions within it, see Reeder, 2012.

with the gift of persuasion' (Bird, 1997, p. 38); they have judgement, wisdom, practical skills and religious discernment in many places, and at times have special skills that enabled specialisation and recognition (Bird, 1997, p. 44; García Bachmann, 2013). In narrative terms, women often play an important and at times equal role, have the same moral and religious obligations as men, and are therefore fully responsible for their actions, which makes them, by default, civic and legal persons.

When applied to Judges, these wider considerations prompt us to see the פילגש as morally responsible for her behaviour in 19.2, a moral agent embodying the decline of Israel as much as male characters. Judges 19's appalling picture of a woman used by the men around her is also in contrast to wider notions of right relationships within families: the very type of principles the leaders of 21 seek to circumvent. It would therefore be unwise to treat the picture of Judge 19 as a picture of the 'norm' advocating unbridled oppression, it is rather as an exception even within a society that favours the rights of men over women's.

4.2.2.2. Family relationships

The nature of family relationships, linked to gender, is equally revealing. Irigaray argues that in most societies, the authority of men and women is asymmetric: the father gives or takes the name, the possessions, the rights to the spiritual domain, particularly at the juncture between family and society, nature and culture. The mother keeps the physical substance as reproductive and nurturing body (Irigaray, 1987a, p. 145).

At first glance, Irigaray's words apply easily to Judges 19-21. Fathers and husbands are heads of family, who control the giving and taking of women; women's tribal identity and personal genealogies are subsumed into the men's. Possessions are not mentioned *per se*, but the women of 21 become guarantors of the men of Benjamin's ability to possess their inheritance. The juncture between family and society is powerfully exemplified: Benjamin can only be Benjamin if it reproduces through legitimate (Israelite) women, and Israel can only be Israel if a long-lived Benjamin is part of it. The women of Judges 21 are reduced to their reproductive and nurturing ability.

At this point however, we must note that an identical process operates for the men of Benjamin: their wishes are not explored, their grief at the loss of existing partners and children not acknowledged. The social need for Israel to ensure the continuity of Benjamin overrides any individual or existing familial concerns. They are subjugated to the idea of the family as effectively as women are, and their new 'family' is constituted on the

basis of their need to reproduce. Therefore, whilst males may have primacy, they are not free to act independently. Interestingly, the male-female relationship is reflected in the nation-family relationship.

Assessing the role and functionality of family in 19-21 is a difficult task. Having a sense of the 'normal' is essential to argue that there is deterioration. The echoes between the story of Achsah, another woman from Judah, in chapter 1 and that of the פילגש help trace the deterioration of family norms. Both leave their husbands to go to their fathers, for different reasons and very different outcomes. Achsah is named, her status and relationships clearly defined, stable and safe, a full wife with attendant legal protections, she speaks for herself, whereas the פילגש is unnamed, a lesser wife, never speaks, the relational markers keep shifting, and the men around her do not protect or respect her, but actively endanger and harm her. The question is, is Achsah the norm or the exception against which to judge 19-21?

If we read Judges canonically, the answer is: the norm. Straight after the end of Judges we find either the story of Ruth, set in Judah, a story of right, positive and respectful family relations (albeit still within a framework of male dominance), or the story of Hannah, loved, respected and protected, an active participant and the default spiritual leader in her family. Judges 19-21 stands out at the low point in between two 'high points'. Achsah, Ruth and Hannah represent both norm and aspired-for norm: stories of how women can and should be part of families in this place and time, within the constraints of a specific social framework. Canonically, Judges 19-21 represents an exception whose specific placement implicitly provides a critique of the story.

4.2.2.3. Women as money of exchange

I now turn to Irigaray's specific picture of possible configurations of gender relationships and how they apply to Judges 19-21. Following Marx, Irigaray argues that in the male economy, women function as money of exchange between men; the men enter relationships as active subjects, recognising each other's rights, whilst women are the object of these transactions (see 1.3.1.1). Fathers control the transactions, with the aim of reproducing themselves in their sons.

Transactions

Exclusive relationships between men are exemplified in both 19 and 21. The Levite and his father-in-law do not include the פילגש at any point. We do not know what previous

contract had led to the woman becoming a פילגש rather than full wife, but it is unlikely she would have chosen this fate for herself (Hamley, forthcoming). What transpires between the men is unclear; maybe a power game, the father showering hospitality on the Levite to remind him of his own status; or the father could be trying to win the Levite over to ease his daughter's fate. What is clear however, is that it is happening solely between the men, and seals the fate of the פילגש. At no point does she appear as a subject after she brings the Levite to her father's house. The hospitality scene at the old man's house initially shows no overtones of bargaining. Once the men are at risk however, the virgin daughter and פילגש become a bargaining chip to keep the men safe. The old man does not even consult with the Levite: there is a tacit assumption that his offer is valid and acceptable, which betrays commonly held values that do not need voicing, and therefore sheds light on the state of gender and familial relationships. The collective bargaining of men and use of women in transactions is repeated in chapter 21. In 21.22, the reason for which male relatives are expected to come and protest is not because they have been excluded in the proper negotiation of bridal contracts, nor because the women have been mistreated, but because they may have incurred guilt through their daughters/sisters marrying the Benjaminites against their oath. What is at stake is how the men themselves relate to one another and whether they have preserved their status and moral standing. The value of women as brides and mothers is simply assumed, with the corollary value put on virginity. The women of Jabesh-Gilead are sorted according to their sexual status. The process is less explicit with the women of Shiloh; however, the mention of fathers and brothers suggests women whose sexuality still belongs to the family of origin, therefore unmarried, therefore virgins.

Mediating the bonds of power

The use of women in male exchanges is not reduced to domesticity and male genealogies. Women provide 'doorways in and out of war' (Niditch, 2008, p. 193), mediate bonds between men of power, and are implicitly involved in reconciliation. The פילגש provided the pretext for war. The women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh provided the means to return to peace. Reconciliation is achieved through the redistribution of women, an exchange that goes beyond a simple contract surrounding reproduction, but symbolically signifies the re-acceptance of Benjamin as a full tribe, the willingness of Israel to forgive, the putting behind of sin, the restoration of unity, much in the way of a physical sacrifice.

The exchange of women was a well-known way of sealing peace in the ancient world (Webb, 2012, p. 501); indeed, Israel had been specifically forbidden to make peace with Canaan in this way. Ironically, after intermarrying and failing to adhere to the Covenant, now Israel intends to follow through on a ban against marrying a certain group, one of their own (p. 502). The crisis is initially precipitated by the inability of the tribes to use women as a doorway to peace, because of the oath. The oath could charitably be taken as an attempt to protect their daughters. However, it is more likely an additional feature of the attempt to exterminate Benjamin by depriving them from access to reproduction, and to prevent the possibility of reintegrating the tribe through marriage. When Israel changes their mind about reconciliation, they are therefore forced into the elders' bizarre compromise. Hence the process lacks integrity as a traditional peace process: there is no *exchange* to speak of, and Benjamin is done to, rather than being a partner at the negotiating table. While women are the doorway to reconciliation, the process is more akin to the offering of a sacrifice than to traditional bargaining.

The roles men and women play

In an economy where the consumption and exchange of women is primary to social order, Irigaray sets out three type-roles for men, fathers, husbands and pimps, and three type-roles for women, mothers, virgins and prostitutes (1.3.1.1). Judges 19-21 shows two sets of fathers: the father of the פילגש, who does not seem to exert any specific rights over his progeny, and the fathers of the women of Shiloh, prevented from exerting the rights the system would normally offer them. We then have one 'husband' in 19, and six hundred potential husbands in 21. The 'husband' of 19 treats the woman's sexuality and person as his property, but reproduction is not mentioned. The Benjaminites are potential husbands, and assert their rights over the bodies and sexualities of their wives-to-be as they seize the women of Shiloh. The chapters abound with 'pimps': the Levite who throws his פילגש to the crowd yet reclaims her as his property so he can use her body; the old man who offers both daughter and guest; the elders of Israel who arrange the illegal seizing of six hundred women. Yet we have many men whose identity is not defined in relation to women: warriors and men of valour; the men of Gibeah, neither pimps nor husbands but 'worthless men' whose primary victim was actually a man; the men of Jabesh-Gilead killed summarily. The text exceeds Irigaray's categories and highlights the limitations of a Marxist analysis.

Irigaray is more expansive on the roles available to women (1.3.1.1). Mothers belong to nature and function purely as property and basic production/reproduction. Interestingly, mothers are completely absent from 19-21. In the story, the potential brides do not function as mothers, but as virgins, Irigaray's second category. As virgins, they have pure exchange value, they are pure possibility and only exist as symbolic value. Boundaries are blurred with the old man's daughter, offered to the crowd, specifically as a virgin. As such, she represents her father's wealth and status; for the crowd to take her would irretrievably remove her from the future to which she was destined. Instead of being offered in marriage, she is offered for gang rape in an attempt at bargaining between men, in a perversion of the traditional virgin daughter role. In contrast, the women of chapter 21 fit the category as 'possibility' and 'symbolic'.

Irigaray's last category is that of prostitute, prostitution being the exchange of use between men. The body of the woman gains value from having been used already (Irigaray, 1977). The פילגש is passed round other men by the Levite, yet she does not quite fit the category of prostitute, despite the damning זנה of verse 19.2. First, she is used as money of exchange: sex against safety, and as a substitute for a man; second, whilst her value does reside in the fact she has been 'used' already, the value is in the fact she has been used by the Levite as sole 'owner', rather than pimped to various bidders. Her status is unclear throughout: she is no virgin daughter, yet still נערה; despite being married, she is not mother, nor portrayed as likely or desired to be. The פילגש fails to belong, fails to conform to any social categories. She only exists in between, just as most other characters in 19-21, sitting awkwardly to traditional definitions. The social world of Judges is collapsing.

4.2.2.4. Public/Private tensions

Irigaray extensively considers public and private domains and their respective values (1.2.3.2). She describes official history as partial and slanted, privileging male values: male genealogies, war instinct, desire to possess and capitalise to assert power. Traditionally, women renounce being women to become wives and mothers, roles defined against a hypothetical universal dictated by men. They ensure domesticity so that men can be released to be civic persons. Men on the other hand lose their domesticity in order to represent 'man' to the city. Judges seems to fit Irigaray's description well; as we have seen, many critics have argued that it must be read as a political book, concerned with the affairs of men and state. When women are recognised within it, it is because they cross

into the male domain (Deborah, Jael). In 19-21, the one woman who acts independently, the פילגש who committed some transgression termed זנה, and left her husband, is brought back into submission to male values. She had trespassed into the public domain by leaving the marital home, and later come out of her father's house to meet the Levite outside, but meets disaster and death precisely within the public space onto which she had trespassed, and is not allowed back into the safety of the private world as she lies on the threshold.

However, the most violent act committed against the פילגש occurs within the marital home: 'the place that is expected to serve as the secure centre of a woman's life (and the locus of whatever authority she may have), becomes for this woman, the site where her husband finally, and most horrifically, destroys her' (Bohmbach, 1999, p.96). While Bohmbach sees this as a reversal or collapse of traditional categories of public and private, it is more of a symptom of the way in which all space has become unsafe for the פילגש as Israel's descent into amorality pervades every aspect of its life. The same dynamic is at work in 20-21 as the women of Jabesh-Gilead are taken away from their burning homes, and the traditionally safe time of a religious festival turns into abduction and violence in Shiloh. Women are slowly erased from both public and private spaces, so that as the book of Judges draws to its conclusion, they disappear from the text, with the final episode not narrated as it happened but existing only in the plans of the elders that the men of Benjamin are said to execute.

Whilst Irigaray's argument holds, the historical context of Judges requires some caveats. In a household-based society, there cannot be a sharp public/private distinction; women's networks around the household will inevitably contribute to both mediation and disruption (Meyers, 2013, p. 144). In addition, the very language of the 'house of the father' undermines the public/private dichotomy by denoting both place and lineage (Bal, 1988a, p. 20). Bal and Meyers' point is well taken; however, contributing to the economy through the household is not the same as having a say in its structures and processes; furthermore, it is a system in transition, and in 19-21, political discussions do not occur in homes but at central points such as Bethel and Mizpah. Women are not part of these deliberations, even when political decisions deeply affect their lives. Women are killed or kept alive according to their private lives and whether they have 'known a man by lying with a male'. So whilst there are cautions to do with historical context, it is hard not to

acknowledge the erasure of women from public life in 19-21, in contrast to earlier parts of Judges.

4.2.2.5. Hospitality

The concept of hospitality intersects public and private worlds: welcoming the stranger, the outsider, into the home, according to rules set for public relations. Hospitality scenes pervade Judges 19, in the father's house and the old man's. Commentators have often stated that Judges 19 is about models of hospitality whose rules must be understood and taken into account (Auld, 1984, p. 235). What would be considered 'normal' hospitality? How long are guests meant to stay? Does hospitality apply only to men or to all guests? Who has the upper hand within the encounters? What expectations do the father, Levite and old man have?

Hospitality is rife with danger for both host and guest, as Hobbs (2001) points out:

> As guest, the stranger is in a liminal phase, and may infringe upon the guest/host relationship: by insulting the host through hostility or rivalry; by usurping the role of the host; by refusing what is offered. On the other hand, the host may infringe: by insulting the guest through hostility or rivalry; by neglecting to protect the guest and his/her honour; by failing to attend to one's guests, to grant precedence, to show concern. (p. 10)

This approaches Irigaray's description of the encounter with the Other as causing a 'tear in our temporal weaving' (1.2.2.2): our stories of who we are can be disturbed, prompted to be reconfigured; meeting the Other always precipitates a choice between hospitality, and rejection and threat. Irigaray has much to stay about what she considers true hospitality, being able to welcome the Other as Other, therefore going beyond material needs, *versus* the pitfalls of hospitality that merely replays social conventions. False hospitality makes no space for the unexpected Other, but rehearses a conversation already scripted.

Critics disagree on hospitality in 19-21. Boling (1975, p. 274) and Chisholm (2013, p. 490) see the father's hospitality as paradigmatic, lavish and faultless, an intended contrast to the events in Gibeah. Butler (2009, p. 421) questions whether the father's hospitality is generous or excessive, welcoming or overbearing, and whether the old man, as alien, had the right to offer hospitality on behalf of Gibeah. Yamada (2008, p. 71) argues that both hospitality scenes show excess and distortion of normal hospitality as an indicator of wider moral and social chaos. Others see the hospitality scenes as the site of contested power between men (Jones-Warsaw, 1993, p. 180). It is difficult to discern the exact

nature of the scenes without extensive ethnographic data. Working with Irigaray however leads us to examine power and relationship dynamics carefully, without an easy dichotomy between inferior and superior power but rather examining the different powers at play within the constraints of the overall economy. She also leads us to acknowledge the invisibility of women, erased from both scenes, only appearing when male bonding is disrupted. Whether the rules of hospitality could ever stretch to offering another man's פילגש to an angry crowd is debatable, and there is little evidence to suggest that the laws of hospitality did not apply to women in ancient societies (Block, 1999, p. 541), though some critics have argued so to exonerate Levite and old man from their actions (Biddle, 2012, p. 187; McCann, 2002, p. 130; Miller, 1996, p. 110; Penchansky, 1992, p. 82; Tapp, 1989, p. 164).

4.3. Plot and characters

Judges 19-21 has long been a contested site for interpretation, and much of the debate surrounds the intent of the text (political, domestic, spiritual), and whether the text is one that promotes patriarchy and terror for women – in and out of the text – or actually undermines patriarchy through subtle narration (Fewell, 1987, p. 84). Answering this question means determining whether an overall narrative voice offers a moral and spiritual commentary on the events portrayed. For this purpose, I will now conduct a detailed narrative analysis, using the categories that Irigaray herself uses in her textual analyses (2.2.1): first, I will analyse interpersonal dynamics, with a particular focus on structure, characterisation and perspective, followed by intertextual references that situate the text within a wider grid of meaning. I will then turn to an analysis of speech and silence, and draw conclusions on narration overall.

4.3.1. Structure of 19-21

4.3.1.1. Overall structure

I began exploring the structural unity of Judges 19-21 in 4.1.2.2, and highlighted recurrent motifs and parallels within the three chapters. The chapters are articulated around a series of crises leading up to and then from the civil war: a marriage crisis, trying to get away from the father-in-law, a crisis of bed-hunting, a crime-fuelled crisis, a crisis surrounding how to respond to crisis, a crisis of identity for the tribes gathered at Mizpah, a crisis when Benjamin refuses to hand over culprits, a series of crises as battle does not go according to plan, a crisis for defeated Benjamin, two crises caused by unwise oaths. Chapters 19-21 are constructed symmetrically and need to be understood together, as an

account of the intricate relation between private and public identities, and how identities are built, shaped, challenged, preserved or, destroyed.

The question of identity in 19-21 plays itself out on the issue of 'who is Israel' (who is in and who is out) and 'what is Israel' (how should Israel behave). There are two ways to illustrate the structure of Judges 19-21 to reflect those questions.

First, there is a movement that marks out fragmentation and unity between tribes:

A. Tribes, families and clans live in separate areas. Separate identities linked to geography are clear in the references to those 'sojourning' in other areas. (Judges 19.1 to 19.21)

B. Act of violence: tribes and people previously loosely connected by Israelite identity become 'them' and 'us'; it is unclear from behaviour who is a 'true' Israelite. (Judges 19.22 to 19.28)

C. The Levite calls for a united response. It is a call that may not be answered, a liminal moment. (Judges 19.29-30)

D. 'All Israel' assembles 'as one'. (Judges 20.1-2)

C'. Israel calls for a united response against Benjamin. Another call, another liminal moment: Benjamin is given the opportunity to stay with Israel, but refuses. (Judges 20.3 to 20.13)

B'. Unity starts breaking down: 'Israel' against Benjamin, 'Israel' against Jabesh-Gilead, Israel against Shiloh. (Judges 20.14 to 21.22)

A'. Each tribe, family and clan goes home, as separate tribes and people (Judges 20.23 to 20.25)

In parallel to this national pattern of a crisis of identity, we can trace a parallel pattern that applies to public and private identities, and how the crisis leads to private/individual patterns being adopted and legalised, therefore integrated to communal identity.

A. Individual account of male violence, against one woman (judged illegal and foolish: נבלה). (Judges 19)

B. Retelling of the events by the Levite, asking for a communal response to something considered un-Israelite. (Judges 20.1 to 20.7)

C. Communal response: war against Benjamin. (Judges 20.8 to 20.48)

B'. The elders/assembly deliberate and define what will happen next in detail, a communal response to preserve 'Israel' as a 12-tribe entity (Judges 21.1 to 21.11 and 21.14-22)

A'. Communal act of violence by the men of Israel/Benjamin against the women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh, this time legal and sanctioned by elders and assembly. (Judges 21.12-13 and 21.23 to 21.25)

With both readings, chapter 20 functions as the apex of the narrative, the moment of heightened crisis that demands decision. And with both readings, we see a parallel movement in 19 and 21, which shows that the crisis has changed Israel fundamentally: what was private in 19 becomes legitimised and public in 21. The chapters clearly work together and illustrate the relationship between the public and the private in the life of Israel: something echoed in the last sentence of Judges, 'In those days there was no king in Israel, and each man did what was good in his own eyes.' The refrain articulates this relationship between the political situation and the way it works itself out in the lives of individual members of Israel. My first diagram could support interpretations that argue the crisis is solved as the tribes return to normal as Soggin or Boling do. The second diagram in contrast points to a key question: how can something that seemed to be a key feature of Israel's self-perception – 'such a thing has not been seen in Israel' – become something commanded and sanctioned by the elders themselves?

4.3.1.2. Chronology

Another feature of the structure of 19-21 is its complex chronology, with flashbacks and eluded scenes. Irigaray points to chronology and time positioning as crucial, as symptoms of how speech is used in specularising time and positioning the speaker in relation to both origin and goal (1.3.2.3). This specularisation works at several levels: the narrator with respect to the overall story of Israel, the narrator with respect to characters and events, and characters' own relationship to time as expressed through reported speech. The unit opens with the refrain's temporal positioning, 'in those days'. Readers are invited to think of themselves as distant from the historical setting, yet connected through the text. The text is therefore a mirror to another time and place, in which readers may see themselves reflected; 'in those days' invites us to recognise the text as Other, yet reflect on how it relates to 'now'. Many details obliquely link the narrative backwards and forwards within the history of Israel. The Levite's home in Ephraim evokes past stories, whilst the פילגש

from Bethlehem projects us ahead into the world of Ruth and creates an allusion to David (Szpek, 2007, p. 3). At this point, the text works as bridge between canonical past, present and future.

The narration follows precise timings throughout chapter 19. Time moves quickly at the onset, with four months come and gone in a sentence. Then time slows down with a drawn-out hospitality scene, and slows even more on the day of departure, a very long day indeed, with multiple indications of the fall of the day and marks of the passing of time: בקר (8), ערב (9), היום רד מאד (11), תבא להם השמש (14) and ערב (16). The liminal time of sunset, marking the passage from safety to danger, is overextended and creates an ominous impression of a race against the sun (Fields, 1992, p. 23). The night of the פילגש is also punctuated by numerous time references: כל־הלילה עד־הבקר (25), כעלות השחר (25), לפנות הבקר (26), עד־האור (26), בבקר (27). The impression is that of an interminable night, which invites compassion without describing her ordeal. The night-time setting draws on well-known symbolism of night as danger for cultures without major sources of artificial light (Fields, 1992). The normal rule in Biblical narrative is to start tasks early, continue during the day, finish in time to be home before dark, then stay within the safety of home (p. 21). The contrast with the topsy-turvy day of the Levite who feasts first and sets out on a journey later unmistakably signals trouble. Daybreak, another liminal time, could herald relief and safety, yet as the narrative picks up pace and time accelerates again, the פילגש is trapped in the aftermath of a night of terror. The narrator then abruptly abandons time indications. The shift from a chronologically tight narrative to a time-less one creates a sense of relief that the slowness of a dreadful evening and night is over. At a deeper level, it distances the narrative of 19 from 20 and 21 by anchoring it in the local, individual and precise. The later lack of time markers makes Israel's response appear swift and decisive, yet there is no guarantee that it was so.

The narrator resumes time indicators when Israel goes into battle in chapter 20: ביום ההוא (15), בבקר (19), ביום ההוא (21), ביום הראשון (22), עד־הערב (23), ביום השני (24), ביום ההוא עד־הערב (26), מחר (28), ביום השלישי (30), כפעם בפעם (31), כבראשנה (32), ביום ההוא (35, 46), ארבעה חדשים (47). Here time markers work differently from chapter 19. They convey order and comparison, with two identical first days of battle, then a third day which begins similarly, and the Benjaminites expect to develop similarly, yet yields

different results. The narrator tells the story linearly until 20.36, then loops back to expand on the tactics used to defeat Benjamin. The chronology removes suspense but allows concentration on the 'how', and heightens the sense of arrogance in Benjamin who thought themselves invincible. The final time indicator, four months at Rimmon, echoes the four months of 19.2. Just as the Levite went after his פילגש after four months, so will Israel reach out to Benjamin. The echo sets up a parallel between Benjamin and the פילגש as wayward partners, and Israel and the Levite as husbands seeking reconciliation. Yet the parallel also suggests that Israel's motives and behaviour will be questionable, and may lead to disaster and dismemberment.

Chapter 21 opens with a further flashback, mirrored by a second one later in the chapter. Information is only revealed when needed. There are few time indicators, and chronology is once again loose and open to speculation. The people coming before God עד־הערב (21.2) echo the crying in Bethel in chapter 20, and the numerous references to evening in 19. Then, with both the Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh episodes, the narrator has the episode described proleptically by leaders giving orders, but not narrated directly, just as in chapter 19, what happens to the פילגש is described proleptically by the old man (19.24), and by the Levite retrospectively (20.5). This could reflect reticence to describe distasteful episodes, and it enhances the guilt of speakers as ultimately responsible for the events they set in motion. A gap is thereby created between event and foretelling/retelling, a gap which could 'sanitise' the event, or give room for readers to fill in with devastating details, and interrogate themselves on how and why they fill the gaps in the way they do.

4.3.1.3. Spatial positioning

Judges 19-21 also involves complex spatial positioning, in a landscape with connotations and references beyond the book of Judges. Irigaray encourages a thorough exploration of space, examining barriers, liminal spaces and the delineation of physical space between self and Other, as we see in her analysis of Plato's *Cave* (1974, p. 350ff).

In Judges 19, the unusual spatial positioning of the פילגש is striking, as noted in 4.2.2.4, consistently moving into public spaces and disappearing from private ones, safer when she travels alone than with companions. The threshold she stretches across is symbolic of her position as a פילגש and a woman, never belonging fully, and echoes the story of Jephthah's daughter, who meets her fate when she crosses over the threshold of her father's home. Contrary to expectations, she appears predominantly outside, and not in

domestic spaces: apart from the Levite's home, where she is not tending to cooking, but instead dismembered as an animal would be in a macabre reversal, before being sent *out* again. She only appears in places and ways that are unexpected and liminal.

Specific markers of place in the story create echoes to other parts of Scripture, as mentioned above with Ephraim and Gibeah. Jebus (19.10-11) is laden with significance, as the first battle in the book of Judges, and where the Israelites brought Adoni-Bezek to be mutilated (Schneider, 1999, p. 257). Gibeah and Jabesh-Gilead similarly resonate with echoes of dismemberment and sacrifice from the story of Saul dismembering the oxen (1 Samuel 11). The physical lay of the land functions as graphic representation: a choice between Jebus and Gibeah, between Canaan and Israel, between paganism and Yahweh worship, a choice that proves to be no choice as the two nations have become indistinguishable in practice.

A network of evocative places is also present in 20-21: Mizpah, a place of significant gatherings in the Samuel tradition for victory against the Philistines (1 Sam. 7.5-14) and Saul being chosen as king (1 Sam. 10.17-24); Gibeah, Saul's own city; Bethel, possibly an alternative sanctuary (Lanoir, 2005, p. 213); Jabesh-Gilead, another link to Saul (1 Sam. 11, 31; 2 Sam. 21); Shiloh, located in Canaanite territory, linking back to two gatherings in Joshua for solving internal issues (Auld, 1984, p. 240), and ahead to the sanctuary at the beginning of Samuel. The physical landscape is therefore laden with meaning, and marked out as liminal in a book that chronicles the transition between conquest and settled life: Israel has not yet settled the whole of the land, and travelling necessitates crossing or coming close to Canaanite territory. In the same way, Israel is still in limbo between local religions and worship of Yahweh, which begs the question, has Israel conquered Canaan, or Canaan conquered Israel?

4.3.2. Characterisation

4.3.2.1. Names and namelessness

While the physical location of the story of Judges 19-21 abounds with specific markers, it is striking that its characters are all nameless. Are the people nameless because they are types that will echo characters elsewhere in Scripture, or because they represent the whole of Israel at this time? Their namelessness is even more striking when we consider the level of detail in 19: they are carefully painted and characterised, with information on their relational status (to people, place and time). As the narrative unfolds, characterisation loosens and individuals start to merge into groups: Benjaminites, elders,

fathers and brothers, women of Shiloh… The move to Israel as 'one man' is a clue to the function of individual characters as representative.

Feminist critics have argued that the namelessness of women belies their apparent centrality in Judges (Brenner, 1993, p. 13); the argument however fails to account for the namelessness of many male characters. Losing identity by losing one's name shows that the dehumanisation of Israel at work in Judges starts with the most vulnerable (young women like Jephthah's daughter), but progressively spreads to all as no-one is safe when everyone does 'what is right in their own eyes'. Here, the Levite, the old man, the men of Gibeah, the leaders, the mighty warriors and the elders are all nameless. The only named character is Phinehas (20.28), who does not function as an active character but rather as a temporal marker following Joshua, setting the narrative early in the history of Israel's life in Canaan.

Characters are not named, but situated through relationships and perceptions of their social status: the woman in Judges 19 is פילגש, נערה, אמה and אשה. The absence of a unique signifier encourages readers not to see her as a person in her own right (Cheng, 2002, p. 123) but always contingent. The predilection of feminist critics for naming her (Bal, 1999; Exum, 1993; Monroe, 2013) disturbingly replicates this violation of unique identity by imposing someone else's sense of identity onto her. It also changes the dynamics and message of the text. The woman of Judges 19 is a nameless victim, one whose community has failed her twice: first by allowing her to be brutalised, second by failing to remember her. The men of Judges 19 have been equally, though differently failed, as namelessness allows them to hide and eschew responsibility; an entire community has failed to name them as perpetrators and is thereby complicit. The pervasive namelessness begs the reader to scrutinise the entire community, rather than locate responsibility on specific individuals, as well as ask how we today remember and bear witness to atrocious crimes. Hudson (1994, p. 63) suggests that the murdered woman, because of her namelessness, can become an icon of abused women, and her story lifted to higher significance, as that of the 'unknown soldier'.

Anonymity in Judges functions as an indicator of the gradual loss of personhood and nationhood (Hudson, 1994, p. 49). In a world where everyone does 'what is right in their own eyes', there is no room for holding common values and processes that protect the rights of individuals and households. Paradoxically, the extreme individualism of the end of Judges leads to a loss of the individual, symbolised by the descent into namelessness.

Hudson (1994) reflects that naming invites a double movement of separation and union, complementing Lacanian and thus Irigarayan views: 'without a name the person immediately enters the realm of objectification and inauthentic living, but an authentic person is one who is both a namer and a hearer of names, both an I and a Thou' (p. 56). In Judges 19-21, naming and recognising the Other as both Other and belonging to the same human horizon, is replaced by the use of intellectual classifications: characters are identified through functional relationships, link to place, status in society or the judgement of others ('sons of Belial'). Intimacy, personhood and openness to the Other are lost.

4.3.2.2. The Levite

Ambiguous beginnings

I will now move from a consideration of the overall pattern of namelessness to an analysis of specific characters. I will start with the Levite as he appears first in the narrative, and readers are drawn into the world of the text through his actions. The Levite is introduced by his title and place of residence. Referring to him as Levite sets up continuity with chapters 17-18. Michelson (2008, p. 82) wonders if this is the same Levite, since Micah had been from Ephraim and the Levite from Bethlehem. The Levite of Judges 19 however is *a* Levite, not *the* Levite; in addition, the Levite of 17-18 was consistently referred to as נער, whereas in 19 the Levite is איש as opposed to his פילגש, repeatedly called נערה, and his servant, נער. The link however sounds a note of caution: being a Levite is not a guarantee of probity or righteousness. In 19, the protagonist is not consistently called 'a Levite'. His Levitical identity only surfaces when it is useful: when asking for hospitality, appealing to the tribes and endowing him with a sense of entitlement. No context, family or attachments are mentioned. His only relationship is to the פילגש, an odd relationship as no first wife is mentioned. Why would he only take a פילגש? Why not a full wife? Is there a full wife in the background? Unanswered questions abound. The Levite is introduced as a stranger, sojourning in Ephraim. Sojourning would be typical of a Levite who did not have his own land (Moster, 2015, p. 724). Together with the old man from Ephraim sojourning in Gibeah in 19.16 and the Bethlehem פילגש now living in Ephraim, this creates a sense of no-one being in their proper place, and sets displacement and otherness as important themes.

The man is clearly not poor, as he has two donkeys and a servant accompany him (Butler, 2009, p. 420). The narration of his marital troubles is terse and matter-of-fact, and initially suggests he is the injured party, as indicated by the particle על following זנה. His going after the פילגש, bringing a means of transport for her, casts him in a positive light: a wronged husband willing to forgive, thoughtful enough to think of how she will get back to Ephraim comfortably (though there are three people travelling yet only two donkeys). Readers are drawn in to feel an initial sympathy – which will heighten the dismay at his later treatment of the פילגש.

In the father's house

The Levite is brought into the father-in-law's house by the פילגש, a passive participant. He had set out to persuade her, לדבר על־לבה (see chapter 3 note 10), but the narrative never records him doing so. In all other instances of intentional speech (leaders and elders in 21), the narrator states that the intent was acted upon. The lack of precision here introduces doubt. Critics often point to the apparent weakness and indecision of the Levite (Klein, 1989, p. 164). He stays longer than the customary three days, has nothing to say, and gets up to go four times, yet stays behind. When he finally decides to go, his words do not suggest an active decision, but rather an attempt to escape: ולא־ האיש ללון אבה (Wénin, 2013, p. 203). The feasting seems excessive and self-indulgent: several days of eating, drinking and making merry, with no work or activity referred to. His choice of departure time then seems foolish, late in the day rather than in the coolness and light of early morning. Readers' sympathy may not have drained yet, but the Levite appears weak, hedonistic and too eager to please.

The journey and arrival in Gibeah

Once out of his father-in-law's house, the Levite becomes master and seeks to regain his dominant position (Wénin, 2013, p. 205). While it is the boy servant who initiates the wise move of finding shelter for the night, the Levite quickly dismisses him to assert his own (ironically foolish) opinion. While he converses with the servant, he never addresses the woman he had come to speak to.

Sitting and waiting in Gibeah, there is little sense of proactive interaction on his part. Once an old man approaches and initiates conversation, the Levite's words are instructive. He is economical with the truth: he says he is from Ephraim, but not a sojourner there; he

stresses his association with the House of Yahweh, presumably his Levitical identity, suggesting this was the reason for the trip and that this entitles him to a much better reception. He portrays himself as a reliable, pious man, but his speech reveals him as self-centred: whilst the narrator had stated 'no-one invited *them* in', the Levite changes this to, 'no-one has invited *me* in,' thereby occluding the פילגש and servant boy. The Levite then insists that he needs nothing from his host, which could be construed as insulting, implying that the old man would not give him proper hospitality. He does not come across as highly likeable anymore.

Throwing the פילגש to the wolves

A repeat of earlier feasting and hospitality follows, but the scene is interrupted, the Levite threatened, and characterisation takes an unexpected turn. Following the old man's offer, the Levite throws his פילגש out without a word. Critics have disagreed vociferously in assessing his actions. A strand of thought seeks to justify both the old man and the Levite's actions by arguing that it is not unusual for men of the Old Testament to use their wives to save their own lives, as Abraham and Isaac did (Bal, 1988a, p. 159), or as Lot offered his daughters, and that both are acting legally by exercising their power of consent over their women's sexuality (Kawashima, 2011, pp. 14-15). Penchansky (1992, p. 82) reads the incident as a contest of hospitality with host and guest both trying to protect the other, which the Levite wins by disposing of his פילגש (Penchansky does not comment that he is also saving himself). Auld (1984, p. 238) focuses on the absolute taboo of male rape, and seeks to exonerate the Levite by suggesting he was so horrified at the thought of a virgin daughter being thrown out that he put out his פילגש himself (but Auld does not consider that such an altruistic man could have given himself up first, as the intended target). Moster (2015, p. 727) argues it is not the Levite but the old man who throws the פילגש out since the old man had been the subject of the previous sentence in 19.24 and had made the suggestion in the first place. The argument is not convincing: the actual previous sentence has the men of Gibeah as a subject; the old man is always referred to as the 'old man', not just 'the man'; as the old man was the host, and had made the suggestion, it would have been more logical for him to throw out his own daughter; finally, the syntax, 'the man seized his פילגש' suggests that 'the man' and 'his' refer to the same person. It is difficult to exonerate the Levite, and indeed, one wonders why one should. Block (1999, p. 541) pertinently asks why the man should dispose of the

פילגש he had gone to such lengths to retrieve. Why indeed? The cognitive dissonance created between the readers' appreciation of the man so far and his present actions prompts a re-reading of the earlier narrative, picking up on the small clues that may have been missed at first reading. The narrator gives us some subtle clues too; the man who had until now been 'אישה', her husband, now becomes simply, 'האיש', the man. He is no true husband, and the relationship is revealed as one of rule and power in the following verses as he becomes 'אדנה', her lord/master. The door is shut, and readers are given a small window to imagine the man's distress and possible shame and guilt at the fate of his פילגש.

Responding to events

19.27 sees the door that the Levite had opened to throw his פילגש out, opened again, to let him out, and escape from a town of horror. He had just got up; the implication that he had slept and was ready to start the day as if nothing had happened paints him as callous and detached. The terse, clipped account is in sharp contrast to the next verse, the shock of the image hinted at with הנה, and the graphic picture of the פילגש, laid across the entrance reaching out for safety. The picture evokes emotion, the Levite displays none. The detail of the hands suggests she had tried to enter the house, perhaps beating on the door, crying out for help. Yet neither Levite nor host were waiting up for her, ready to bring her in and tend to her (Reis, 2006, p. 143). Some charitable commentators have tried to explain the Levite's reaction through shock and trauma, or lack of realisation of what an ordeal she had gone through (Frymer-Kensky, 2004, p. 126; von Kellenbach, 2000, p. 184). While this could explain his 'getting up', it does not explain the lack of reaction and cold command.

He does not ascertain whether his פילגש is alive or dead, but slings her on a donkey as you would a parcel, takes her home and dismembers her. The narrator does not pinpoint the moment of death. At this point, the man's status as a Levite is important, as his status would have prevented him from contact with a corpse (Ex. 32.25-29; Num. 8.10-18; Deut. 18.1-8). Not checking could imply he thought she was alive, then he likely is her murderer. Dismembering her could imply he thought she was dead, in which case he shows no concern for Levitical laws. The dismembering is puzzling and unexplained. The Levite desecrates her corpse in a way that denies her dignity in death as surely as he had denied her dignity in life. There is no mourning and no burial. Instead, the Levite calls the tribes to

war with a speech that reinforces the narrator's characterisation of him as duplicitous and self-seeking.

For the first time since 19.1, the Levite is called 'the Levite' in 20.4, but the narrator qualifies it with, 'the man, the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman', as if the 'Levite' was not good enough characterisation on its own. He is not a Levite, a spiritual leader, but a 'man' amongst the men of Israel. The use of 'murdered' is significant, as רצח, normally denotes premeditated murder (Block, 1999, p. 553). Since the men of Gibeah had let her go, and she had made it back to the house, they clearly had not intended to kill her, which the narrator could reflect by saying she had died. The choice of 'murdered' suggests it is down to someone's specific, intentional action, which could indeed be a condemnation of the Levite's direct killing of her through dismemberment, or indirect killing through throwing her to the crowd. In either case, casting him as victim is questionable, yet this is what he proceeds to do in his speech to Israel.

Unlike the narrator, he presents the woman's death as accidental, 'she died' (מות), as a result of the men of Gibeah's actions. The contrast suggests that the Levite is untrustworthy. His speech clearly depicts him as the main victim, and shifts the intent of the crowd from sexual abuse to murder. His retelling of the events is carefully crafted to avoid blame towards himself, generalises the issue to all the men of Gibeah, rather than a small group of ruffians, and claims the moral high ground by suggesting an outrage (נבלה), something worthy of the Deuteronomic responses we explored in 4.2.1.2. His unreliability casts him as a parody of a judge leading Israel into battle (Webb, 2012, p. 473): there is no external threat, the threat is internal and contained (a few men), yet he misrepresents the events in order to enact a personal revenge, and almost destroys Israel in the process. By the time he disappears as a character, the narrator has effectively made his perspective one that readers cannot espouse.

4.3.2.3. The פילגש

We now come to the פילגש, the woman whose story shapes the whole of 19-21. She is a controversial figure, with critics divided on whether she was unfaithful, passive or active, subject or object, whether she is characterised in any way at all (Butler, 1999, p. 420). The opening of the story, following stories of strong women (Micah's mother, Achsah, Deborah, Delilah) leads readers to expect another strong character. Yet she has no name, identified only through the social roles she plays. She is from Judah, which sets up a loop

and mirror back to the beginning of Judges and the story of Achsah whose father's tribe (the Kenites) were eventually absorbed into Judah (Schneider, 1999, p. 249). Many commentators use the shorthand 'the פילגש of Gibeah' when referring to chapter 19 (Aranoff, 2013; Brooks, 1996; Burney, 1918); why should she be referred to through the place where she met her death, rather than her place of origin? Critics have consistently erased the only glimpse of female genealogy available in the text.

פילגש: a precarious and disputed status

The nebulousness of the word פילגש is worth noting (Chapter 3 note 7). A פילגש is not a full wife with rights enshrined in law, who would enter a man's house through proper practices, *kiddushin*, and with legal documents, *ketubah,* (Aschkensay, 1998, p. 165 note 24), yet she is neither illegal nor illegitimate, neither slave wife nor captive bride. פילגש have a status of their own, albeit an uncertain and precarious one, as is shown in their uneven inclusion in genealogies and harem lists.[98] There is nothing outside of the Biblical text to help define their status, and Judges 19 gives the most detailed glimpse on their lives. An examination of the other major texts that feature פילגש (Bilhah, Jacob's פילגש in Genesis 35; Rizpah, Saul's פילגש in 2 Sam. 3, 20 and David's פילגש in 2 Sam. 5, 15, 16, 19, 20) reveals a troubling pattern. Every one of these texts is linked to a story of sexual violence where פילגש are liminal figures through which men play out their wider political battles (Hamley, forthcoming). There are no 'good stories' of פילגש; they are all dark tales.

Opening chapter 19 with a פילגש therefore sets up the text for a story of violence and abuse visited on a vulnerable member of the household whose status is precarious at best. The fact that no other wives and no children are mentioned further marks Judges 19 out as an odd story. Her status will become even more ambivalent as it shifts between her being called נערה in her father's house, and simply אשה at other times. When she is פילגש however, after his initial 'taking' of her in 19.1, she is always either פילגשו (19.2, 9, 24, 25, 27, 29) or פילגשי (20.5, 6). She does not exist independently, but is marked out as his possession throughout. The entire episode sets a sharp contrast with the story of Achsah

[98] I do not have room here for a full analysis of the status of פילגש, but readers can refer to my extensive paper on the subject, 'Dis(re)membered and Unaccounted for: פילגש in the Hebrew Bible' (forthcoming).

in Judges 1, who was named, whose status was clear and unambiguous, who negotiated with the men and thereby challenged her position as bargaining chip.

זנה

The translation of 19.2 is crucial in analysing the characterisation of the פילגש (see chapter 3 note 8). If the correct translation is 'she was unfaithful', then she is presented as a woman of some strength and independent mind, as well as a moral agent, who, like others in the story, epitomises the moral turpitude of Israel. If she merely became angry or turned away from him, she still is acting as an active subject, but more likely to gain reader sympathy. There is little textual support for changing MT (Hamley, 2015), but following it is problematic. What is the nature of this alleged infidelity? There is no mention of another man, though the four months' wait suggests that the Levite is waiting to ascertain whether she is pregnant. The woman does not leave him to go and cohabit with another man, but goes back to her father, which would normally be the recourse of an 'innocent' or wronged daughter (4.2.1.2). The ambiguity may be part of a careful strategy from the narrator, luring readers to side with the Levite, which makes his later behaviour all the more shocking. By then, readers need to re-examine their presuppositions. Was the פילגש really guilty to start with, or was this the perspective of the Levite? Was the act of leaving so shameful for the Levite, so countercultural, that it amounted to unfaithfulness? Even if she was guilty, does this justify the Levite's actions? If she was guilty, was it because, perhaps, the Levite had been so abusive to her he had driven her away to seek safety in another?

At a first level, this is a traditional narrative crisis: a narrative of forbidden female desire leading to chaos and death, because it suddenly sets the woman as subject with choices that challenge the male view of the universe as under his control and following his rules (Irigaray, 1974, p. 129): rules that, here, define female sexuality as belonging to the men of her household. Irigaray would argue that such an expression of desire and subjectivity (whether it is through being unfaithful, or simply leaving) constitutes a copernican revolution for the man who no longer occupies the position he thought he had within the universe. Whatever the woman has done is neither permissible nor fully representable in the narrative, hence the need for ambiguity. The woman precipitates a crisis by refusing her place as object of discourse and actions. The taboo of female desire may partly underlie so many critics' determination to change MT so she is not unfaithful anymore

and simply commits the lesser crime of abandonment (Achkenasy, 1998; Block, 1999; Boling, 1975; Chisholm, 2013; Soggin, 1981).

At a deeper level, the word is crucial in establishing narrative continuity with the rest of Judges where women do act independently and their actions slowly disintegrate into the same amorality as their male counterparts'. To set up women as 'pure' or somehow occult their ethical choices is to treat them as less than human, or less adult. The narrator does not simply use her as a foil, or a 'type' (victim or whore) but as a complex character in her own right, who, just like all others around, does what is right in her own eyes.

It is interesting that many commentators, following the lead of Reformers (4.1.3.1), either make a causal link between her initial behaviour and what they term narrative punishment, or resist seeing her as guilty because they want to avoid the sense of narrative punishment. Segal (2012) neatly illustrates this by arguing that having the פילגש commit adultery is explaining her death 'too neatly' (p. 102). However, why should one follow from the other? Why the need to have a 'sinless/innocent victim'? Why should she be less of a victim if she had been promiscuous? The debates are eerily reminiscent of what is today termed 'blaming the victim.' The narrator of Judges 19 instead tells a skilful tale, when what happens to the woman is so horrendous that it challenges a simple punishment narrative, and possibly invites readers to re-examine their beliefs about sexual violence. The characterisation of the woman is double-layered, with an initial characterisation that needs re-visiting in light of the later narrative.

Disappearing as subject

The פילגש remains an active subject for all of two verses. From the 'two of them' being the Levite and פילגש, we now have the Levite and his boy servant, a brief interlude with her again, then the Levite and his father-in-law. The פילגש becomes נערה whilst in her father's house, which brings her on the level of the נער, the boy servant, who just like her, bears a recurrent possessive suffix. They are both possessions of the Levite. There is no mother to provide a female genealogy. She is cut off and rootless while her father and husband entertain each other. She seems invisible to both men, though the narrator's choice of words reminds us that while this scene has become about the men and their hearts (סעד לבב), this had all started with the Levite's intention to speak to *her* heart (דבר על לבה). The same dynamic operates in the old man's house in Gibeah. As they

journey out, the status of the פילגש falls further, a mere afterthought in 19.10, after the donkeys. When introduced to the old man, she is אמה (19.19). This may be an honorific form of address, but the Levite singles her out for deeper abasement than the more generic עבד he uses for them all. The ensuing scene carries forward a pattern of the woman consistently disappearing from houses she enters (Lanoir, 2005, p. 161) in increasingly disturbing ways.

The פילגש will now only ever be the object of the men's actions, and never speak or give explicit clues to her mental state. Wénin (2013, p. 216-217) makes an interesting suggestion as to the meaning of her lying on the threshold. He argues she is positioned as watching both the sunrise and the man, now her master, coming out of the house where he has been safe all night. The narration is then focalised through her eyes and enables the reader to come closer to her perspective as she lay dying before a closed door, denied safety and care by those bound to keep her safe. The suggestion of focalisation here is interesting, because it can help us retrace our steps back to the beginning and suggest skilful shifts in focalisation: the beginning would be focalised through the Levite who has 'taken' her and now considers her disloyal; focalisation then shifts to the father, who still sees her as a 'young girl', hence the use of נערה, and the apparent silence and weakness of the Levite as seen by him; we are then back to the Levite and his feelings of being passed over and disregarded as they wait in the square, as well as trying to reassert his authority in interaction with boy servant and old man; then now we get a glimpse of the world through the eyes of the פילגש, before returning to the Levite, and moving on to Israel. Such careful narration ensures a multi-layered and complex narrative, which acknowledges the erasure of the woman's presence by the men around her without fully erasing her from the narrative.

The פילגש never speaks, at least not until her body is dismembered and sent out. Her body parts then speak of her story and bear witness, albeit partially, to her ordeal. In some bizarre reversal, she becomes more loquacious in death than in life, and arouses horror and compassion in death in a way that should have been forthcoming in life. The sending out of the body parts is puzzling. The Levite interprets them *a posteriori* in his speech (20.4-7). There he casts himself as victim, and implicitly blames her for her own death (20.5): the only active verb used in her regard is, 'she died' (תמת, in the *Qal*, the active

voice, instead of the *Hophal* for 'be killed'). Yet the woman's body is not reduced to the Levite's speech, but left as a sign for readers to interpret; it exceeds the words prescribed for it, and demands an independent response, as the Levite unwittingly invites: 'Dwell upon her, give counsel, speak out.'

4.3.2.4. The boy servant

19.3 ushers in a third character, often overlooked: נער, the boy-servant. The choice of descriptor for his function sets up a parallel with the פילגש, נערה in the following scene. Just like her, his descriptor is usually modified by a possessive suffix. Just like her, he disappears from every house. Just like her, he experiences the Levite as אדן (19.12). The parallel justifies translating אדן as master rather than husband with respect to the פילגש. Unlike the פילגש however, he speaks and initiates conversation, which suggests that as a male, he has easier access to subjectivity and holds a higher position than her. Despite being a servant, he is oddly safe in Gibeah: if the men of the city were after male rape, then why not offer the boy servant, who also belonged to the Levite? His status would not have precluded it; only his gender might, which may suggest that homosexual rape was so taboo and unthinkable that offering him would have been too close to acknowledging the full horror of the situation for the Levite. Offering the פילגש instead enables the Levite to reassert the 'normal' order of sexual activity and avoid thinking of himself, a male, as a potential victim of sexual violation. The boy then disappears from the narrative. Readers are left to wonder where he went, and whether he may have been too embarrassing a witness to acknowledge.

4.3.2.5. The father (in-law)

The first hospitality scene signals the entrance of a third male character; he goes by two descriptions, אבי הנערה (six times) and חתן (three times). The term נערה and the constant repetition of his relationship to her highlight the young woman's vulnerability and the complete absence of fatherly behaviour on his part (Reis, 2006, p. 133), compounded by the echo of Deut. 22 and how parents should behave in this situation (4.2.1.2). His attention is entirely focused on his son-in-law (also חתן). He greets him warmly, which either suggests that the girl has not spoken badly of him, or that he disregards her opinion, or that he is trying to win the man over. Critics have often extended the 'warmly' to include the girl's feelings (Schneider, 1999, p. 254) though there is no linguistic or narrative ground for doing so.

The father is master of the household. He repeatedly prevails (חזק) over the Levite, and is the only one to speak; there is no room for any subjectivity but his. His speech is characterised by use of the imperative, though tempered by the particle of entreaty (Wénin, 2013, p. 201). He provides hospitality far beyond what can be expected, though whether this is generous (Block, 1999, p. 527; Segal, 2012) or overbearing (Wénin, 2013, p. 201) is unclear. Assessing his behaviour in light of the following events is difficult: he could be held responsible for preventing the couple from setting out at a sensible time, and blamed for failing to protect his daughter; or we could see his attempts at holding the couple back as the desperate attempts of a father trying to protect his daughter from a man who has legal rights over her life, a daughter whom he still sees as only 'a young girl' (Deut. 22). Whilst the second interpretation is possible, it does not fit as well given that the father does not follow the pattern of Deut. 22 and consistently fails to acknowledge her.

4.3.2.6. The old man

The fourth man in the narrative is the old man of Gibeah. Like the Levite, he is a stranger, sojourning away from home. Home is Ephraim, the very place the Levite says he is from. He might have assumed kinship with the Levite. All the characters are away from home, journeying or sojourning, at the transitional time of sunset, in a place of passing through in the town of Gibeah, an Israelite town on the border of Canaan.

Webb (2012) points out that the man is returning from *his* work in *the* field, not work in *his* field (p. 464), and is therefore neither wealthy nor well-established in Gibeah, which undermines his right to offer hospitality on behalf of the town. Without initial greetings, the old man ascertains where the strangers are from; on hearing the response, a sense of kinship is created and the old man takes the group in. It may be straightforward hospitality, or a foreboding sign that he knows that strangers will be at risk in Gibeah, and he wants to protect them from xenophobic violence (Bal, 1988a, p. 92). Initially, the old man seems socially aware, hospitable and generous to a fault (Webb, 2012, p. 467)… until the men of the town pound on the door.

The old man's earlier insistence at not spending the night in the square now turns ominous. He acts courageously and faces the mob. At this point, interpretations differ. Was he in real danger? Or were the men after the Levite and therefore no risk to him (Lasine, 1984, p. 39)? The old man is the first to suggest offering the woman as a substitute. The man is his guest (19.23) and therefore cannot be harmed. The woman,

absent from the drinking scene, is not his guest in the same way, not mentioned, nor worthy of protection. His daughter is his to use. He is fully aware that to hand them over will lead to the men doing 'what is right in their own eyes', in a chilling echo of the refrain.

A high number of (male) critics at this point seek to explain and justify the old man's offer. Most of these rest on honour and shame interpretations: the old man is caught out by circumstances, and his honour is at stake; homosexual rape is utterly taboo and shameful and heterosexual rape a less shameful, acceptable substitute. Hence his sense of duty towards his male guest supersedes his obligation to his daughter and female guest (Block, 1999, p. 537); McCann agrees emphatically, and describes the old man as the only righteous person in the story, offering 'right' hospitality (2002, p. 130); Kawashima (2011, p. 14-15) sees his action as a legitimate use of his power of consent over women's sexuality, whilst Morschauser (2003, p. 482) states that the old man carefully reminds the crowd of their duty and what cannot happen and argues, bizarrely, that his use of 'do what is right in your own eyes' is an invitation to self-restraint through ethical reflection (p. 478). A number of faultlines underlie these arguments; first, there is no evidence from ancient texts that hosts would have had no obligations towards female guests; second, the old man has no legal power over the sexuality of another man's wife, hence his offer trespasses on the Levite's rights; whilst the argument about the taboo of homosexual rape is powerful, it is unclear why the old man thought that two women could offer a suitable substitute; his speech does not seem to invite restraint but rather give permission. The echo of the refrain and its judgement over a degenerate Israel is unlikely to be a positive narratorial comment.

Others pick up on the shocking nature of the old man's offer, and his sudden transformation from model host to abusive father and accomplice in the gang rape of another man's partner (Webb, 2012, p. 467). The strategy is consistent with the narrator's characterisation of the Levite and פילגש, when initial impressions prove to be either false or at least questionable. In the world of Judges 19, nothing is quite as it seems; the world has descended into such chaos that actions and reactions cannot be predicted, thereby creating an unsafe and inhospitable world for all.

The old man makes the offer without consulting. This suggests that he expects his offer to be acceptable both to the men of Gibeah and to the Levite, which implicitly comments on the state of Israel's social fabric. Consequently, he shows that he is no different from either the men he calls his 'brothers' (19.23), nor from the Levite who stays safely inside

with him, but rather shares their disregard for women and the lives of others. His daughter, meanwhile, has only ever appeared as a possibility in speech rather than as a character. She is invisible and unspoken for.

4.3.2.6. The people of Israel

As we move beyond chapter 19, no other individual characters appear. All new characters appear as subsections of Israel, defined through group descriptions and relationships, and characterised corporately. The move suggests a wider transition from the particular to the general, from a paradigmatic story to an illustration of its pervasiveness in the entire nation.

The sons of Israel

The most common descriptor for the people of Israel is בני ישראל; the emphasis on male lineage and representation is obvious. Women may be necessary accretions, but they are not subjects within the overall reckoning of the people. While tribes are alluded to, there are no specific differentiations between them apart from Judah leading in battle, and the conclusion, with all the men of Israel going back 'to their tribes and families at that time, each man going back from there to his own inheritance' (21.24). The cluster of vocabulary reinforces the gender bias. The references are incredibly numerous: 15 איש ישראל; 11 אנשים (referring to combatants); 21 בני ישראל, 13 עם and six שבטי ישראל. All these terms are used interchangeably for the people who assemble and prepare for battle. This is usually clearly only men. Twice, when the word עם is used, it is then followed by an apposite clause, איש ישראל (20.16, 22) which shows the interchangeability of the two. The only counter-example would be 20.26 which states 'all the sons of Israel and all the people came to weep', which could suggest that the 'sons' refer to the warriors whilst the 'people' includes everyone else. The overall pattern however shows that women were invisible in the construction of national identity within these chapters. This is a matter for men, to be decided by men, albeit in revenge of an attack upon a woman (or was it against the possible murder of a man?). There is little distinction between the people as people and the people as army.

There is a clear emphasis on the unity of 'all' Israel over and against Benjamin (with the irony of whether Israel indeed is 'all/whole' without Benjamin): Israel acts 'as one man', כאיש אחד (20.1, 8), 'all' (כל) the people/sons/tribes/men/clans (20.1, 2, 8, 11, 12, 26, 26, 33), the 'whole' (כל) of Israel/people (20.34; 21.13), and reference to עדה, the 'assembly'

(20.2; 21.5, 8). The insistence on the 'whole' also points to shared guilt and responsibility, and the pervasiveness of decay in Israel: they have all shared in initiating the civil war, all responded to the Levite's speech, all failed to investigate thoroughly, all made oaths that would wipe out Benjamin. Benjamin is similarly described, and thereby equally shares in the guilt of failing to hold the men of Gibeah accountable. The inclusive vocabulary serves to reinforce the judgement of the refrain: they all (each man) did what was right in their own eyes.

An unusual expression עם האלהים (20.2), rather than the more usual עם יהוה (Butler, 2009), could be a subtle narratorial allusion to how far the people have come from the covenant. They engage in civil war without following the steps set out in the laws of the covenant (4.2.1.2). They do not consult Yahweh before making decisions about battle, try to use him as a guarantor of success, then belatedly cry out for help. In chapter 21, they come across as rash, vindictive and illogical. They made oaths to ensure the extinction of Benjamin, yet blame Yahweh for making 'a breach in the tribes' (21.15); they then exert disproportional punishment on Jabesh-Gilead for failing to join a campaign that had been morally dubious from the start. The stipulation that even children should be killed there, whilst reflective of the principle of חרם, is rare and explicitly takes it to its furthest, most gruesome extent (Butler, 1999, p. 459). The planning with regards to Shiloh then shows complete disregard for their oaths, the law, and the lives of affected women and men.

The leaders of Israel

In chapter 20 and the beginning of 21, Israel acts as an entire people, with no sense of overall leadership but rather of mob rule in reaction to shock. The only exception is 20.2, which refers to the chiefs of Israel (פנות). The word is unusual in its lack of ethical connotations, and as a new word for leaders in Judges: not judges nor deliverers, simply chiefs (Klein, 1989, p. 177). They do not act as leaders, do not point the people to Yahweh, do not organize them. Their status is irrelevant as all are subsumed into a greater whole of Israel.

Leaders only appear properly in 21.15-25, as they decide to solve the continuing Benjaminite wifelessness crisis. There they are called זקני, the elders. While the word may normally denote legitimate, wise tribal leaders, here it reminds us of the old man, איש זקן, of chapter 19, whose behaviour contributed to the very predicament Israel is now in. Interestingly, they, rather than the people, initiate action, and see the wifelessness of the

remaining two hundred Benjaminites as a problem (4.2.2.1). Their decisions are in keeping with what readers have been led to expect. No reason is offered for targeting Shiloh. The elders plan everything so that we have an account of what will happen, told before it happens, justifying their actions in an echo of the self-justifying speech of the Levite. The elders command the Benjaminites to interrupt a festival of Yahweh to abduct young women dancing outside the town. Not only is Yahweh irrelevant and not consulted, but a festival of thanks is interrupted, women are abducted (against the laws of Deuteronomy 24), forcibly married, and their brothers and fathers enjoined not to seek revenge or help.

The elders' language parallels that of the ambush on Gibeah (multiple directions including highways to and from Bethel, lying in wait, coming out of a city, seizing). The men are treating the women as they treated the enemy in Gibeah. The warriors are not claiming the booty of war as in Jabesh-Gilead, but using their fighting skills against defenceless women, which echoes the rape of the פילגש.

The most tragic feature of the elders' speech is their planning of what to say to protesting brothers and fathers, preventing them from acting as protectors of the women, as expected within their cultural identity. Just as the Levite put the woman under his protection out to be harmed, just as the old man was willing to throw out his daughter, the elders willingly sacrifice women; as the Levite did not protect the פילגש, out of choice, the fathers and brothers of the women of Shiloh will not be able to protect their daughters. In an ironic reversal, the elders have institutionalised the most brutal features of the rape and murder of the פילגש. What was evil, has now been sanctioned officially. What created the very crisis of identity in the first place has become a national act.

Benjamin

Overall, the people of Benjamin are characterised much as the people of Israel, through their male warriors. The first encounter happens through the 'worthless men' of Gibeah, whose actions come to epitomise the whole of Benjamin when Benjamin refuses to hand them over. The narrator is careful; they are not 'all the men' of the town, only a small band, however powerful and debased. Their purpose for demanding the Levite is unclear, but their acceptance of the פילגש in exchange for him suggests that sexual desire had little relevance. Rather, they were exercising power over a stranger, seeking to shame him, for no other stated reason than because he was a stranger.

The wider Benjamin is collective only, just as with Israel: בנימן, שבטי בנימן, בני־בנימן and איש בנימן. Individual identity is subsumed into tribal concerns. They refuse to hand over the guilty men, and give no reason for their refusal. It may be misplaced loyalty, it may be lack of evidence. They do not seem to investigate or be prepared to apply their own justice. Whilst the narrative begs sympathy for them as they are faced with a grossly disproportional punishment, the narrator does not present them as guiltless, but as equally guilty of doing 'what was right in their own eyes'. They show a consistent lack of judgement: when they should hand over culprits, they refuse; when they should refuse to abduct brides, they acquiesce (Klein, 1989, p. 210). We could add to the list their spectacular arrogance in battle, leading them to disregard the possibility of an ambush and precipitating their downfall. Whilst their choices are active ones in chapter 20, by chapter 21 they have become objects of others' actions and concerns. They are in hiding, traumatised, with no future unless they break the covenant and marry outside of Israel, or Israel takes pity on them. It is Israel that proclaims peace in 21.13, unilaterally, bringing a peace offering of war brides. No-one had consulted with Benjamin as to whether this would be acceptable, they are expected to accept. In a curious reversal, the men of Benjamin, who had tried to feminise the Levite through homosexual rape, are now placed in the passive position of being 'done to', having sexual partners imposed upon them, that the women of the text find themselves in. Only Israel initiates action. Benjamin may have survived, but whether it is still a tribe of equal standing in Israel is debatable.

4.3.2.7. The women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh

These two groups of women form the other set of individuals whose identity is blended into their characterisation as a group. Like the old man's daughter earlier, they do not exist in the text, only in the words of characters who plan their fate. Unlike the old man's daughter however, their fate is actualised. They are defined solely by association with their city, their sexual status as virgins and potential as mothers. They have no agency and no-one is allowed to speak on their behalf. The detailed portrayal of the פילגש, placed in clear parallel to the women of chapter 21, acts as a focal point for the victimisation of all the women of 19-21; she, the victimised, abused פילגש, may be nameless, yet her fate is not forgotten and can serve as a lens provided by the narrator to read and pass judgement on the fate of the women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh.

4.3.2.8. Yahweh

Finally, a character often forgotten as character, yet a speaking character, is Yahweh. The God of Israel appears as a 'walk-in', whose appearance is provoked by the machinations of the people, yet whose response shows a quiet refusal to be manipulated. Israel does not consult before *deciding* to go to war, merely to ensure victory; twice they do so, and twice Yahweh leaves them to be beaten by a much smaller army. Israel's two defeats are crucial in establishing the sovereignty of Yahweh. It is only when Yahweh chooses to give them victory that the battle turns. The people of Israel had assumed that what was 'right in their own eyes' therefore must be right. Yahweh sends no prophet or angel as earlier in Judges, but rather, as the people seek no advice on the righteousness of their action, he gives no advice, continuing the pattern of divine withdrawal in response to Israel's rejection of covenantal principles. Throughout the book of Judges, Yahweh had been crucial to military success, arbitrating in and through war (Niditch, 2008, p. 2). Initially, the Israelites simply enquire as to the means of battle. Slowly, after defeat, they start to ask whether they should go to battle again (20.28), and do so under the ministry of a priest, Eleazar, whose reliability was attested in Joshua. At this point, Yahweh steps in and does the striking (20.35). Despite an account of their tactics, the narrator clearly locates victory within divine intervention (Webb, 2012, p. 490). Yet Israel has again failed to ask more probing questions, and not realised that victory against Benjamin will not solve the deeper problem of Israel's departure from covenantal life. Other חרם texts (including those concerned with Eleazar) normally have Yahweh as initiator (Hoffman, 1999; Zenhder, 2012). Not so here. Yahweh may have given the victory, but there is no sense that he initiated the annihilation of Benjamin.

Questions abound. Should Yahweh have intervened? Is he somehow responsible for the overall problem through non-involvement? Theologically, the question is crucial, because it makes the difference between an indifferent or vengeful God and a relational God of compassion. The overall theological framework of Judges is needed at this point: the picture is that of a people who have consistently chosen to move away from the covenant; yet, despite their lack of repentance, Yahweh sends countless deliverers in response to their pain. The picture however is not that of a cycle, but of a downward spiral, when the people fall further away, and even deliverers become increasingly flawed (4.1.1.3). By 17-18, leaders are no longer raised by Yahweh but self-proclaimed and manipulating religious authority. In Judges 20, there are no leaders left to speak of, and the people show no inclination to listen. As the people fall further away, the divine

presence ebbs away, which culminates with complete absence in chapter 21. The people mention Yahweh, blame him for their predicament, cry out to him, yet there is no indication of seeking out divine will, and they simply plan their own course of action. The narration eludes Yahweh as actor.

To understand the place of Yahweh, we must examine whether the narrator is using specific focalisation in the scenes in which he appears as character. Readers are brought to Yahweh by the questions of the people, and hear the answer with them. If the relationship with Yahweh is focalised through the eyes of the people looking up, one may ask whether Yahweh is absent, or unwilling to respond, or whether the focalisation simply reveals the people's unwillingness and inability to listen and resume healthy covenantal relationships. An indication of such focalisation is 21.15. Some have argued this is a narratorial statement blaming Yahweh for the state of the nation (Schneider, 1999, p. 282); however, in the logic of the text, it rather translates the people's thoughts and feelings, so that the view we have of Yahweh parallels theirs (Lapsley, 2005, p. 60). Another indication of this focalisation is through the narrator's use of words: the people address Yahweh as 'Yahweh', yet the narrator has them speak to 'god' in 21.3. The narrator introduces a discrepancy between the god of Israel and Yahweh as true Other with a will and agency of his own. Yahweh's silence then can be either a result of the people's hardness, or a form of protest on Yahweh's part as he does not accept the accusation, offers no solution, and refuses to be used by them (Webb, 2012, p. 496). Yahweh as character in his own right is then acting proactively in response to Israel.

4.3.3. Intertextuality

Irigaray's approach to narrative analysis is to uncover a series of interrelated patterns; we have so far examined structure (the interweaving of separate narrative strands) and characterisation (the pattern of relationships between characters and between characters and story line). I will now turn to intertextual echoes as another set of key patterns that create meaning. I will restrict my discussion to clear echoes of other Biblical passages that draw on common motifs and concerns (those that work at the level of structure, theme and vocabulary), but will not explore questions of dependence and chronology. I take Fields' argument that common motifs often say more about commonality of experience and culture than about literary dependence (1992, p. 17). They become a way to heighten the significance of a story by linking it to a wider cultural framework. Fields' approach to intertextuality echoes Irigaray's concern for understanding the grammar of discourse, and I will therefore follow his approach:

> Biblical motifs reveal ancient underlying concepts of society and history, of behavioural norms and concepts. The surface level of a narrative tells a story; the subsurface level serves, among other things, as a vehicle for the expression of concepts. (p. 20)

4.3.3.1. Genesis 19

The first, most widely recognised, echo comes from Genesis 19 (Lot offering his daughters to the men of Sodom to protect angelic visitors). The parallels are obvious; structurally, this is a story of antithetic hospitality which helps justify judgement against a city and leads to a crisis about future progeny, solved through dubious means (Edenburg, 2016, p. 186). The plots move in parallel : a small group of travellers arrive in a city at a late hour; they consider spending the night in the square; someone, themselves a stranger, sees them and insists they should come indoors; the host attends to the guests and they share a meal; worthless men from the city surround the house and demand the guests be handed over for homosexual gang rape, the host protests, tries to establish a sense of common values but fails; two women are offered as substitutes, a virgin daughter mentioned in each case; in both cases the host invites the men to 'do what is good in their own eyes'. Common vocabulary further enhances the parallels: לין, סור, שכם לדרך, מהה, רחץ רגלי, אכל, ערב, בית.

The parallels are so strong both in plot and vocabulary that many have claimed that Judges 19 is simply a poor rewriting of Genesis 19 (Boling, 1975; Soggin, 1981, p. 282). The view is often predicated on the idea of a 'primitive' writer using sources clumsily. If we however presuppose that ancient writers have equal skill and subtlety to modern ones, then Niditch's approach (2008) will yield better fruit: 'The international folktale pattern involves weary travellers who seek succour but are instead treated with virulent hostility, thereby casting their hosts as the quintessentially antisocial Other' (p. 192). Her comment makes sense of the intricate relationship between 19 and 20-21; the war against Benjamin is possible only because the story of 19 has cast them as so Other that they can be treated in the same way as an external threat, deserving the same annihilation as the town of Sodom. Both texts comment on anxieties to do with masculinity, with power, with fear of the stranger and with the use of sexuality to assert or undermine identity. Both are cast within a wider political context that demands a good enough justification to explain an appalling loss of life.

Divergences between the accounts are equally revealing about the narrator's intentions in crafting such a closely linked account. Lot is sitting in the square and rises when the guests

arrive, whereas the Levite, the guest, is sitting, unwelcome, when the host arrives. Because Lot is proactive, there is no delay in hospitality. The contrast between the men of the town and Lot is therefore heightened in Genesis, and lessened in Judges. Lot does not ask questions, whereas the old man ascertains who the strangers are, which suggests his hospitality may be conditional. Lot himself prepares a feast whereas in Gibeah they just eat and drink; the old man's hospitality is not as generous or bountiful. No drink is mentioned in Genesis, whereas Judges 19 specifically mentions drinking and making merry, perhaps an implicit comment on the morals of guest and host. Whilst women are offered in both, Lot offers only his own daughters, whereas the old man offers the Levite's פילגש, which further undermines the quality of his hospitality as he disregards the safety of one of his guests. Whilst both permit the men to do 'what is good in their own eyes', the old man's suggestion is more forceful and actually verbalises the possibility of rape (Yamada, 2008, p. 87), which sets him up as more callous. Lot actively argues and shuts the door against the Sodomites, and the men of Sodom protest; in Judges, the door is not said to be shut and there is no protest against the old man; in Sodom, the angelic visitors bring Lot in to keep him safe; in a complete reversal, in Gibeah, the Levite throws his פילגש out. Embry (2013, p. 262) points out that Levites, as priests, were supposed to be representatives of God, a perfect parallel to the angelic visitors; yet the Levite does not act as God's messenger, nor, indeed, mention God. The much greater level of threat in Genesis suggests that in Judges, the Levite overreacts in throwing his פילגש out. In Genesis, all manner of men came, therefore justifying the judgement on the entire city; in Gibeah, only 'worthless men' surrounded the house, so that judgement on the entire city is suspect. Finally, Sodom is judged by Yahweh and through nature, whereas Gibeah is judged by men and destroyed by men (Klein, 1989, p. 166). In Genesis, the visitors tell Lot and his family to get up and go, and they are saved; in Judges, the Levite orders his פילגש up (קום in both cases), but she is beyond saving (Lanoir, 2005, p. 193), highlighting the differential pathos of the stories.

The pattern of divergence therefore shows a carefully constructed account designed to highlight the Levite and old man's actions as significantly falling short of the already flawed hospitality of Lot. More than anything, the parallels prompt readers to expect supernatural rescue, a rescue that never comes, and therefore enhances the picture of Israel as having cut itself off from divine presence and help. This is not the only text used in this way by the author of Judges. Another tale of terror, the sacrifice of Jephthah's

daughter, also throws us back to a parallel story in Genesis, when divine intervention changed the outcome. In Judges, the use of intertextual echoes to well-known stories sets up expectations that are consistently disappointed. In the process, the narrator amplifies the difference between the stories of the patriarchs, flawed but willing to enter in creative dialogue with Yahweh, and the people of Judges, who have forgotten Yahweh, do not bargain with him to save the righteous as Abraham does over Sodom, but simply do what is right in their own eyes. They are left with the outcome they asked for: divine absence, which leaves the nation to self-destruct.

4.3.3.2. Joshua

The book of Judges systematically unravels the achievements of Joshua as tribal cooperation reverts to civil war, leaders fail, and the covenant renewed at Shechem is broken. It is therefore unsurprising that the finale to Judges contains strong echoes to Joshua that reinforce how far Israel has fallen: a united people are dismembered, there are no divinely appointed leaders left, female heroes vanish as women are raped, murdered and kidnapped, religious ritual brings defeat rather than victory and holy war is used against a city to secure wives rather than in response to threat from enemies (Butler, 2009, p. lviii). Beyond the general antithetic parallels, the battle of Judges 20 echoes Joshua 8 and the battle against Ai. Just as with Genesis 19, form critics have argued that Judges 20 is simply a clumsy riff on Joshua 8 (Gray, 1967, p. 372), with a confused description of main battle and side ambush that leads to victory, divine intervention marking victory, after Yahweh promises to 'hand over the city', feinting defeat by the Israelites to draw the enemy out of the city, and the annihilation and immolation of city and inhabitants. The parallel works with both plot and vocabulary: the many people/men/Israel who form the army, Yahweh 'handing over', counting of fighting men, lying in ambush, fleeing, the enemy thinking that the Israelites are fleeing/defeated 'as before', taking the city, setting the city on fire, drawing near the city, setting up camp, direction markers (east, west), fleeing towards the wilderness, pursuing, the smoke of the city rising to the sky, turning back, striking down, slaughter, counting those who fell, inhabitants, livestock… Much of this is standard battle vocabulary, organized around a very similar structure.

Once again, the contrasting details are more revealing; setting up the parallel enables the narrator to suggest what *should* have happened, in contrast to what *did* happen. Superficially, tactics are copied to ensure victory. At a deeper level, the Israelites show they have no understanding of the ethical, spiritual and covenantal dynamics that

underlie Joshua 8 (Chisholm, 2013, p. 506; Wong, 2006, p. 64). In Joshua, the people consult Yahweh first, and the ambush tactic is given directly by Yahweh; they do not enquire of tactics in Judges, but instead do to Gibeah, an Israelite city, exactly what they had done to Ai, a pagan city. The irony – and tragedy – is that Gibeah and the wider Benjaminite territory had been given to Israel as an inheritance in Joshua, and the root of the problem was the refusal to spend the night in 'foreign' Jebus (Webb, 2012, p. 492). Benjamin is treated even more harshly than Ai, with far more dead, multiple cities of Benjamin burnt rather than the single Ai, and the cattle and all booty burnt in Gibeah, unlike in Ai (Wong, 2006, p. 64-65). The cities of Benjamin however are rebuilt, unlike Ai, and therefore do not stand as a reminder of past tragedy for future generations to learn from. After Ai, the Israelites acknowledge Yahweh's hand in giving them victory and renew the covenant, whereas Judges 20-21 sees no celebration, no thanksgiving, and no acknowledgement of Yahweh's role (except to blame him for their mistakes). Once again, intertextual echoes have served to underline the utter dereliction of Israel as a nation and how far it has fallen from covenantal life.

4.3.3.3. Dismemberment and sacrifice

The third set of texts I want to consider are those concerned with sacrifice and dismemberment. Dismemberment was not an unusual theme in the ANE, as we can see from the well-known story of Seth's murder and dismemberment of Osiris in Egyptian mythology for instance. There is no hint of anything more than a shared background culture with other ANE texts, but clear echoes of two specific Biblical narratives.

Genesis 22

Genesis 22 and the non-sacrifice of Isaac has already been mentioned as an echo to the story of the daughter of Jephthah, and fits within wider allusions to Genesis in Judges. In Judges 19, the story is alluded to through the motif of human sacrifice as the פילגש is dismembered. Two specific vocabulary parallels suggest an intentional allusion. Both texts use יחדו שניהם (Judges 19.6 and Genesis 22.6, 8), the only two passages in Scripture to use the expression in reference to human companions (Monroe, 2013, p. 45). Even more saliently, an unusual word for knife (*ibid*.) occurs in both texts: מאכלת. Both texts state, 'he took *the* knife'; whilst the definite article makes sense in Genesis as it had already been mentioned in 22.6, there is no antecedent in Judges, and the combination of unusual word and definite article suggests a deliberate echo to a very different scene, a scene interrupted by divine provision. The echo may suggest the פילגש is alive at this point, just

as Isaac was. Yet there is no divine intervention, again. In Genesis, the episode was initiated by Yahweh; here, the Levite takes action on his own. The echo also suggests sacrificial overtones, amplified by the fact that the man is a Levite. A human sacrifice, forbidden by laws that were not yet available to Abraham, carried out by a rogue Levite who never seeks divine direction, and is not confident in Yahweh's provision: the indictment is searing.

1 Samuel 11

The narrator's oblique judgement is further reinforced by an echo to another sacrifice-dismemberment text, 1 Samuel 11: Saul dismembering the oxen and sending out the pieces as a call to arms. The echoes are obvious: נתח לעצמי, specific language normally used for animal sacrifices (Niditch, 2008, p. 190); the ritualised method for a call to arms; the emotional response; parallel locations (Gibeah, Benjamin, Jabesh-Gilead). Similar vocabulary includes לקח, נתח, שלח, בכל גבול ישראל, כאיש אחד, repeated time of day indicators.

Lasine (1984) argues that the connections function to

> highlight the perversity of the Levite's dismemberment of his concubine *vis-à-vis* Saul's dismemberment of the oxen, and, in general, to expose the wrongheadedness of the military action against Gibeah and Jabesh-Gilead, as opposed to the later deliverance of Jabesh-Gilead. (p. 42)

Incidentally, the use of 1 Samuel 11 as positive example over and against which to Judge Israel and their fight against Benjamin, rather undermines a blanket argument on Judges as anti-Saulide. Saul is driven both by anger (an acknowledged emotion, unlike the Levite's cold, impenetrable actions) and by the Spirit of the Lord, much as earlier Judges were; the parallel therefore sets up a contrast between the Levite and both Saul as a later leader and Spirit-led leaders earlier in Judges, which leads us to see the Levite as a parody and an usurper of rightful leadership. In Samuel, we are told the pieces are distributed by messengers, and they are given a specific message to accompany the physical sign; in MT the message is cryptic and does not explain the call to gather, what led to it, nor what would happen should the people fail to respond. In Samuel, the threat is external, in Judges, internal. And of course, the main contrasting detail, is the sacrifice of a human being as opposed to an animal. Every detail contributes to the portrayal of the Levite's actions as misguided and abhorrent.

The narrator has therefore subtly but powerfully built up a strong picture through plot, characterisation and allusion, a picture of moral decay, of broken relationships and of a nation descending into moral, spiritual and social chaos. Furthermore, the contrast highlights the role of Yahweh; in texts where some (however flawed) do not simply do 'what is right in their own eyes', Yahweh intervenes and responds; in texts where the people are intent on ignoring the covenant and do not engage in dialogue with Yahweh, Yahweh does not impose his presence but withdraws and allows them to do 'what is good in their own eyes', with horrifying consequences.

4.4. Speech, silence and narration

My argument so far has been that the narrative voice in Judges subtly guides the readers towards moral judgements without ever making them explicit. This is not universally accepted, as we shall see. This section will continue to explore the narrative articulation of the passage to underline its overall theological and moral message, by considering the role of the narrator specifically, the use of speech and speech choices, and the use of silence and narrative gaps. In Irigaray, these three elements are intimately linked, because the narrator makes speech and silence choices which shape both explicit and implicit meanings, and contribute to the type of subjectivity and identity constructed and made possible within the world of the text (see 1.2.2).

4.4.1. Narration

4.4.1.1. Disputes on narration

Over time, interpreters have often argued that Judges 19-21 shows little narratorial intrusion or overt judgement. Many state that the storyteller appears untroubled about the events of 19-21 and presents the assembly at Mizpah as the restoration of the covenant with Yahweh (Ryan, 2007, p. 166). Such evaluations disregard how the story is told, intertextual echoes and the use of irony. Ryan is fairly representative in his judgement. Amit (1999, pp. 338-340) argues that the conclusion to Judges shows 'well-oiled, well-functioning tribal mechanisms that maintain order and punish wrongdoing', evidence of a professional army, that the elders 'investigate and respond in a balanced way' and therefore the conclusion is a 'song of praise to pre-monarchic frameworks' by a narrator uninterested in critiquing institutions (p. 338). It is rather difficult to see how the chaos of the last three chapters fits this description: the Levite is not punished; we do not know whether the culprits in Gibeah may be numbered amongst the Benjaminites who fled to safety; chapter 20 recounts the drafting of civilians into a makeshift army, so badly organised that despite much superior numbers it is defeated twice and only gains victory

through guile; the elders never investigate and are not mentioned until chapter 21, when they promote further morally compromised solutions to a problem of the people's own making. How the response can be seen to be 'balanced' when an entire tribe is almost exterminated for the crimes of a small group of men seems a rather odd statement. As such, it is hard to accept her assessment of the narrator's interests and purpose. Amit further contends that the apparent disproportion between crime and punishment is symptomatic of an 'unusually high moral sensitivity' and therefore idealised. Again, this is hard to demonstrate narratively: there is little sense of moral judgement from the tribes; whilst they are outraged, we are never told exactly what by; their later behaviour towards the women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh certainly suggests it is not prompted by compassion towards the victim of Gibeah, but by wounded national pride and misplaced solidarity with the Levite. Moster (2015) takes the argument further:

> The Levite is not punished for his inaction during the rape and murder scene or for his shocking act of body mutilation. To the contrary, he emerges as an outspoken leader who is especially able to unite the tribes of Israel. (p. 279)

Again, this assessment fails to consider that the very fact the Levite is not punished is an implicit judgement on the tribes, nor does it pay attention to irony and the parallels which set up the Levite as a parody of a rightful judge.

Others question what kind of tale the narrator is telling, and whether they explicitly blame Yahweh for the state of Israel (Schneider, 1999, p. 282), or simply present Yahweh negatively as a character unwilling to get involved, thereby inspiring horror (Wénin, 2013, p. 197). Whilst some argue that the tale is told to inspire horror, others argue that the narrator deliberately alternates ludicrous/comical scenes with tragic ones to distance readers and prevent sympathy (Lasine, 1984, pp. 43-44). Again, a lack of attention to textual dynamics underlies these statements. The question of Yahweh's portrayal is tricky yet attention to focalisation and not confusing the narrator's perspective with that of characters is helpful here, as well as a consideration of 19-21 within the overall context of Judges and its placement within the canon. Lasine's comment reveals that the emotions and reactions a text provokes are highly dependent on the context and predisposition of its readers, and easily occlude narrative processes. Whilst readers cannot be abstracted from the process of interpretation, because they shape meaning through their interaction with what is said and left unsaid, they cannot simply control all the meaning of the text and appropriate it, as this would fail to recognise the otherness of the text and the people

behind its composition (2.2.5). Returning to analyse narrative dynamics can therefore help us define the boundaries within which interpretations can be made.

Disputes around narration in Judges 19-21 further extend to the person of the narrator and the (unconscious?) biases they may carry, particularly in terms of gender. Some, like Bach (1998, p. 5) and many other feminist critics, argue that the narrator is obviously male, and working to a patriarchal agenda. Bach sees the narrator as intentionally leading the story, but argues that the details it focuses on define other details as irrelevant, such as the reactions and feelings of women; she also states that the narrator presents the story as inevitable, that there were no other options open to the Levite than to throw his פילגש out, that the order and progression of the story make its end (rape and murder) seem a 'logical conclusion' and 'inevitable outcome'. The story indeed omits details of the women's reactions and feelings; however, it does not give details of *anyone's* feelings, and hardly any overt window onto emotional reactions. I disagree about the conclusion of inevitability; the intertextual echo chamber cries out for a different conclusion, as if the narrator suggests every way in which the story could have progressed differently. The narrative progression is down to the characters' own choices. Bach also fails by seeing the murder and rape of the פילגש as the end of the story; it is not. The story does not end until the end of chapter 21 and its refrain (she does speak about 21, but in isolation, as a story of political necessity). Reading 19 in isolation does violence to its careful crafting as part of a wider narrative. Bach equally forgets to identify the story as part of a wider narrative that explicitly draws attention to the deteriorating fate of women. Her critique is therefore light on actual analysis, and fails to distinguish between the perspective of characters and that of the narrator, or to understand how the narrator may be working from a patriarchal context yet undermining its presuppositions by showing their utterly devastating consequences. Here we are reminded of Irigaray's caution about identifying what is possible within the world that gave birth to the speech uttered.

Judges is not a treaty on the social life of Israel. It is a story meant to provoke readers to think and respond, in the style of the Former, rather than Latter, Prophets. For story to work at its best, subtlety and taking the reader by surprise are essential strategies. Here, the narrator has carefully woven an implicit yet stringent critique throughout the tale, but invites readers to think and judge for themselves rather than simply 'tell' them. The strategy is risky: subtlety can be missed. But for readers attuned to the cultural context and its stock stories and motives, the challenge is powerful. Some critics go as far as

arguing that the narrator's strategy has allowed them to tell an almost unthinkable story by interweaving it with a typical 'male story' of battle and politics:

> The storyteller has two tales enfolded in one: he has told a 'man's tale', complete with male politics, civil war, and crisis management. Yet, he has skilfully presented a 'woman's tale' as well, exposing the treachery of the patriarchal home in an unbalanced system where men are favoured. (Aschkenasy, 1998, p.76)

By the end of this chapter, I will have demonstrated how the narrator weaves this subtle tale of dark irony to give a complex picture of a world inhospitable not simply to women, but to human flourishing as a whole. I therefore now turn to a fuller exploration of the devices used by the narrator in inviting readers to judge for themselves, much as the Levite invites Israel to think and respond to the spectacle of the victim's body parts.

4.4.1.2. Ambiguity and wordplay

Careful narration is obvious in the powerful use of ambiguity and word play. As the story progresses, gaps are created for readers to make initial assumptions that need revisiting and questioning. Some of the ambiguities are highlighted in the two LXX versions, one of which contains significant glosses on ambiguous or unclear words and sentences (LXX^A).

Judges 19 opens the story with a contested word, זנה (see 4.3.2.3). The פילגש works as a focal point for a whole range of ambiguities, many of them located in the word נבלה (folly, outrage, disgraceful thing). The word is first used by the old man in 19.23. He has come out to speak to the men of the town, and addressed them as 'my brothers'. He is seeking identification with them, inviting them to see him not as Other, but kin, someone to listen to. At first glance, it is quite clear he is not kin, as we have been told pointedly by the narrator. The old man is a sojourning alien. As the story progresses however, men gradually bond over their agreed abuse of women: first with the old man's offer, then the Levite's actions, and finally in Israel procuring brides for Benjamin. On second reading, we find that the old man may not differ from the ruffians of Gibeah after all. He enjoins them not to do evil (רעע), then expands to say, do not do נבלה. What exactly is נבלה? Here it appears to be homosexual rape of a stranger; it may refer primarily to homosexual rape, or to the abuse of a stranger and breaking the laws of hospitality. The word appears again in 20.6, 10, by which time the meaning has shifted significantly. In 20.6, it is used by the Levite, who has just told the congregation he was threatened with death by the men of Gibeah, who also abused his פילגש. Is נבלה the threat of his death? Or is it the abuse and

death of the פילגש? Or both? Homosexual rape has disappeared from the equation, yet something evil and disgraceful is still established to have taken place. To the Levite's audience, the alleged attempted murder may be considered the greater crime and disgrace. To the readers however, who know he was not threatened with death, the choice remains between either non-actualised homosexual rape, or the only 'real' event of the story, the gang rape and death (which the narrator has just termed 'murder') of the פילגש. The narrator has created the space for us to see the fate of the woman as the most disturbing and evil point of the story. The same ambiguity is repeated in 20.10, yet amplified because Israel are now taking up the word; without an explanation of their thoughts, and with the likely multiplicity of perspectives in the crowd, meaning is nebulous. An additional hint may also nudge us towards seeing the woman's fate, including her dismemberment, as the true 'disgrace': the word play on נבלה. With the second syllable pointed differently, with a *tsere*, the word now means 'corpse'. The disgraceful thing is the very body, abused, maimed and dismembered, presented to them.

The scene in Gibeah is rife with ambiguities. There is a slight ambiguity as to whether the old man may have thrown the פילגש out (4.3.2.6), which would enhance his guilt. When the Levite opens the door out onto his פילגש and orders her to get up, we are told there was 'no answer/ answerer' (chapter 3 note 45). The double meaning creates doubt as to whether the פילגש is simply unconscious and cannot answer, refuses to answer, or whether there is no one to answer because she is dead already. Uncertainty about the time of death leads LXX to add that she had died, thereby removing the ambiguity. MT however leaves the matter open, which makes the meaning of the dismemberment ambiguous: is the Levite actively killing her or desecrating her corpse? Keeping the ambiguities open strengthens the sense of collective guilt of all men in chapter 19.

The Levite then distributes the body parts, with no message recorded in MT. The body parts themselves are an ambiguous message. What do they signify, beyond a possible call to gather, a shocking enough message to gather disparate tribes? Is it the very act of sending out body parts, cut along the bones like those of a sacrificial animal, נבלה, the kind of thing 'not seen in Israel since they came out of Egypt'? Or do they signify events so terrible that they could only be symbolized in extreme fashion? Israel's response is equally ambiguous: 'Nothing like this has happened or been seen since the days when the sons of Israel came out of the land Egypt, not until this day. Dwell upon her! give counsel! Speak

out!'. First, it uses a third person feminine pronoun, 'her'… the פילגש? This could be an acknowledgement of her personhood even in death, and a hint that it is the פילגש and her fate that the tribes are focusing on. Alternatively, this could be an anodyne use of the pronoun reflecting the fact that most words for corpse in Hebrew are feminine (chapter 3 note 48). Or it could be a reference back to נבלה in both pointing (corpse and/or disgraceful thing), with the narrator again inviting readers to consider the פילגש. Second, כזאת, just like נבלה could be read in a number of ways. The ambiguity is again closed down in LXX^{a} though LXX^{b} follows MT (chapter 3 note 49). LXX^{a} offers a long addition that mirrors the instructions of Saul in 1 Samuel 11 with messengers telling the people how to respond, rather than reporting the words of the crowd in response to what they have seen. The ambiguity of MT creates more space for readers to wonder what really is the 'thing' that is worth pondering and speaking out against, in keeping with the narrator's strategy elsewhere.

Chapter 20-21 change gear, and illustrate the way in which Israel has responded to the ambiguous call of the Levite, without ascertaining the facts, without discerning right from wrong, and without setting their thoughts on the true נבלה, the abuse and murder of the פילגש, as they set out to re-enact murder and abuse on a grand scale in chapter 21.

4.4.1.3. Irony

As already mentioned, irony plays an essential part in the narrative strategy of Judges; this has been recognised widely, though most salient in Klein's work on irony as a unifying principle and interpretative lens in Judges (1989). Klein pushes the concept to its limits, highlighting situational irony: Abimelech, the man who killed his brothers on a stone, killed by a millstone; Samson, led astray by his wandering eyes, having eyes gauged out; the פילגש, an unfaithful woman, dying from an excess of unlawful sexual behaviour. This is grim irony, which reinforces the sense of widespread guilt amongst Israel. Identifying irony however does not tell us what to do with it theologically and ethically. There may be irony in the fate of the פילגש, but does it justify it? And could the narrator be playing with conventions of 'natural justice' whose naturalness they question, by inviting the reader to sympathise with those who are victims as well as sinners? Irony in Judges works closely with parody and caricature; discerning whether the writer is intending irony to be read as parody is not always obvious, and perhaps at the heart of the more difficult decisions that

lie in interpreting Judges 19-21. As such, Klein may be right, but is chapter 19 a parody of the poetic justice we saw earlier in the book? Or is there a pattern of progressively grim irony, so that readers who cheered the death of distasteful Abimelech are now challenged by the fate of the פילגש, which may be ironic, but certainly not worth cheering. The space between these different interpretations is that created between text and reader within which new meanings and possibilities can occur, in truly Irigarayan fashion.

Much of the irony of the last three chapters works at a simpler level. Israel works together only to destroy itself rather than fight against external threat; the self-destructive nature of the episode is the deepest irony underlying the chapters, and undermines the claim to see those chapters as optimistic. Chapter 19 unveils a couple turning away from Israel's neighbours for safety only to find that it is Israel (or rather, a few men within it) they should have feared in the first place; the irony is picked up and amplified in civil war as Israel shows itself to be the greatest possible danger to its own survival: the figures of dead in battle greatly exceed any from previous episodes in Judges. The man who had gone to speak to her heart instead makes his own heart glad without ever speaking to her. The Levite, who should be a spiritual leader, has a פילגש who commits adultery and whom he peddles to other men, in contravention of Levitical laws on sexual purity for priests; he re-enacts ritual sacrifice yet on a human subject, and leads the people, not into worship, but into civil war, based on false testimony. The Levite trivialises Israel's history by comparing the present crisis to the Exodus, so that in parallel with remembrance of a defining story of salvation he is asking them to ponder and remember something inchoate and ill-defined, half-truth, half-lies. Just as the פילגש came to be a focus for ambiguity and uncertain meanings, the Levite focuses irony in 19.1-20.7. He asks Israel to go to war for the פילגש whose plight he has caused (Schneider, 1999, p. 272), and is willing to sacrifice the sons of Israel on the account of the woman he abused to save himself (Butler, 1999, p. 443), if indeed, it is on *her* account he has asked them to go to war, rather than on *his* account of attempted murder. Many will be killed in response to his false claim of having almost been killed.

Irony carries on shaping the narrative in chapter 20, in the account of the battle that arrogant Israel has so rashly entered, and in equally arrogant Benjamin's failure to consider the possibility of defeat. From 20.29 onwards, the narrator draws out the irony with repeated clues that Benjamin really should have known better, yet expected everything to go just 'as before'; once the ambush takes place, the unsuspecting

Benjaminites are slow to realise their demise; the split chronology serves to amplify the note of irony in the second telling of the ambush, as if the narrator could not quite believe Benjamin had been that stupid. At this point, grim irony resumes with the allusion to Joshua 8 and the fact that Israel was burning down its own hard-won inheritance.

The opening to chapter 21, when read in conjunction with the rest of Judges, also strikes an ironic note. The men of Israel, who had had few scruples about intermarriage, are now worrying about marrying their daughters to kinsmen, because of a rash vow whose consequences they could have easily foreseen. The choice of which city to target also heightens the irony of the entire episode: the people who did not respond to the Levite's misleading call to arms become the brunt of a punitive campaign (Klein, 1989, p. 188). So a campaign, ostensibly to avenge one brutalised woman, and possibly a man, now leads to the mass murder of men, women and children (Biddle, 2012, p. 201). The specific command to murder children is particularly chilling given they, like women, would have had no part in the decision of whether to join the military campaign. Israel is ready to murder an entire city in order to repopulate another (Schneider, 1999, p. 280). The irony grates even more when we read, twice, of Israel's 'compassion' for Benjamin, a compassion so narrow they fail to extend it to Jabesh-Gilead. Readers are forced to wonder whether this was compassion, or rather self-pity for their own broken sense of national identity. The men of Israel repeat the story of sexual coercion and murder on a much larger scale, and find they are still lacking. They then repeat the same again towards the women of Shiloh, framing the decision as an act of mercy. The use of military and ambush vocabulary in planning for Shiloh adds a final ironic touch to the episode by showing the men using military tactics in time of peace, to abduct women. The mighty warriors' skills have been utterly perverted and misused by the end of the book.

Irony has worked throughout the three final chapters of Judges in creating cognitive dissonance between all that the people should be, and what they are, because they do not acknowledge Yahweh as king and instead do what is right in their own eyes.

4.4.2. Speech

The next stage in our narrative analysis is to study how speech and silence work to construct the reality the text; Irigaray argues that speech is particular powerful in its relationship to social order, in linking the I and the Thou, the individual and the collective, and in creating identity through self-representation (1.2).

4.4.2.1. Chapter 19

Chapter 19 opens a window on a man's world, in which every man present in the narrative, including a young servant, speaks, whilst no woman does, including the woman whose story is being told. The possibility of dialogue is evoked in the Levite's intention to speak to her, yet never actualised; one may wonder if a dialogue would have occurred anyway, or whether it would have been an attempt by the Levite to re-appropriate the woman, using speech as an instrument of mastery. The only words he will say to her will be 'get up and let's go' in 19.28, words unanswered as the פילגש is either unconscious or dead, unable or unwilling to enter into dialogue. The Levite then asserts his mastery over her by manhandling her body, finally tearing it to pieces, at which point she comes to 'signify' independently, in ways that escape the Levite's full mastery, with ambiguity, uncertainty, and a call for sympathy on her behalf.

Once the Levite enters his father-in-law's house, he is conspicuous in his silence. There is no verbal exchange reported between the men, no sense of an I and a You in conversation, but rather a power play within which the father has the upper hand, as demonstrated by his repeated use of the imperative. The words of the father belie the sense of fellowship of the men drinking 'the two of them together' (19.6). This is not a togetherness of exchange and open hospitality, but rather one of a father seeking control over his son-in-law.

The Levite finds his voice once he comes out of the house, yet this does not turn into open dialogue. The boy servant initiates speech, makes a suggestion, tries to influence the course of events. He does not simply ask the Levite for directions, but clearly starts a discussion with the expectation of being a partner within it, even if a lower-ranked one. The Levite however immediately reasserts the mastery he had lost in his father-in-law's house, as hinted at by the narrator's description, אדניו. The boy retrospectively shows himself wiser than his master. But the master wants to be in control of his environment and the people within it, and this is first exerted through speech. Speech here also serves for the Levite to differentiate himself from those he considers Others, the Jebusites, and thereby assert his perceived identity as an Israelite. The Other, here, is the negative image, the one whom the Levite is not, rather than an Other with whom identity is built in dialogue and relationship (see 5.1). He does not expand on his thoughts however, what exactly does he expect to find in Jebus? He may be reluctant to associate with them for

fear of being sullied, or because of distaste for different customs, or for fear they may treat *him* as a stranger. Either way, Jebus represents a threat to his sense of identity.

Dialogue finally opens in Gibeah. In the public square of another city, the Levite is forced into conversation at last, though his words betray his fragile sense of identity and need to assert himself. The shift from the plural of the narrator to the singular of the Levite's words, 'no man has invited *me* in' is instructive in terms of his relationships with those who accompany him: they do not belong within his personal identity. The shift to the singular occurs within his words; he starts with 'we are travelling' but quickly defaults to 'I'. He expands on his identity, in response to the old man's pointed question, 'where are you going and where are you from?' Before any true dialogue or relationship can be established, the men assess each other, displaying suspicion of the other and the need position themselves within the wider social order. The old man does not reveal he is a stranger in Gibeah; the narrator tells us. As fellow strangers, the men should be on an equal footing. Withholding this information gives the old man the upper hand as host and resident. The Levite's response betrays similar concerns. He seeks to establish himself as someone with a claim to respect, and compensate for his alien status by emphasising he is a Levite and wealthy enough to travel with everything he needs. In addition, he subtly insults his host by implying that should the old man be unwilling to extend customary hospitality, he can provide for himself and his dependents. He shows politeness, with the use of אמה and עבדם; interestingly, whilst he singles out his פילגש with a term of polite abasement, he only includes himself in the plural, עבדם. The differential term, combined with the singling out, places her in an inferior position to all others present. Lapsley (2005, p. 44) notes that the use of אמה as a device to express humility is normally only ever used of a person speaking of themselves. When used of a third party, it simply refers to a slave woman. The Levite therefore uses his פילגש to purchase humility at her expense, but also puts her down, in a subtle pattern of humiliation that would now be recognised as emotional abuse. The Levite is struggling to strike the right note, oscillating between being overbearing and obsequious. The old man retreats with the word שלום. The greeting indicates the relationship can now proceed, and he will offer hospitality. The old man mirrors the Levite's self-centeredness by extending peace only to him, in the singular, and not to the פילגש (or the boy).

The next dialogue is again a contest between men. He who has not revealed his alien status to the Levite tries to pacify the men by alluding to shared identity, 'my brothers'. Whilst the men undoubtedly know the Levite is a stranger, they do not highlight the fact in their words, nor do they highlight the old man's alien status, unlike the men of Sodom in Genesis 19. Whilst we may infer that strangeness is a factor in their behaviour, this is not evident in their speech. There is no dialogue, the men only speak once, though a further response is inferred in 19.25. Their language is direct and graphic, using the usual euphemism, ידע, for sexual intercourse. In this specific context however, the word hints at something deeper; 'knowing' as a euphemism for sex points to the shared intimacy presupposed in the act, and the attending possibility for self-disclosure of personal identity; here, 'knowing' the Levite would violate his identity and what should only be self-disclosed.

The old man comes up with a proposal and offers two women he considers available. The offer itself illustrates the respective value of women and men, and the added value of virginity. His speech singles out the man as his guest, reflecting his earlier use of the singular in addressing the Levite rather than the entire group. The gender opposition in his speech is striking: twice he contrasts the acceptability of abusing women, and the evil and outrage of abusing the man. The use of נבלה is consistently applied to what would be done to the man, but not the women. This suggests it is not sexual violence *per se* that is disgraceful and unthinkable, nor simply violence against a guest, since the woman is one as well. It is sexual violence against a *man* that is the problem. Gender expectations and value judgements lie at the heart of his offer. The offer of another man's פילגש may transgress against another man's property, but also shows the two men united in fighting against a common enemy, men who threaten their sense of self as *men*. Somehow the old man stands in solidarity with the Levite, maybe as a fellow alien and therefore at risk of the same treatment, or indeed, as one who has already experienced the men's treatment of strangers. The old man however does not shy from graphic details of what the men can do to the women he offers (Wénin, 2013, p. 13), and uses the Biblical word closest to the contemporary meaning of rape, ענה. This could be interpreted as callousness, or a hint of titillation; or it could be seen as an attempt to shame the men by naming the exact nature of what they are proposing.

The woman never speaks, yet her corpse is meant to signify something to Israel, something that on the one hand, is the lie of the Levite, in one final betrayal and rape, yet

also something which escapes the Levite's attempt to contain her. Hepner (2012, p. 820) argues that the dismemberment is a travesty of the laws of divorce of Deut. 24.1 which enable a man to divorce his wife by giving her a ספר כריתת, a 'document for cutting off'. Once dead, her body is cut up for it to speak like a document, and she is sent out, as a divorced woman sent away; Benjamin is then cut off from the rest of Israel as if divorced by the tribes. Hepner's suggestion is seductive, but sadly not based on strong parallels: the words for cutting are different, while the word document does not appear in Judges.

4.4.2.2. The Levite's speech and Israel's response

The next significant set of spoken words is the Levite's speech to assembled Israel. This is a different type of speech in that it is addressed by the one to the many and therefore precludes I-You interaction (Irigaray, 2002, p. 24). It is therefore primarily a positioning speech: positioning the Levite with regards to Israel and interpreting events for them, attempting to create a link between the past and a desired future, between origin and goal. In speaking to many, he is attempting to appeal to a sense of common identity to propel the nation into solidary action.

The Levite presents his grievance in response to the question, 'how could such a thing happen?' He has become the 'Levite' again, and 'the husband of the murdered woman', indicating how he appears to the rest of Israel, yet also an ironic narratorial quip. His entire speech is couched in the first person singular, designed to present himself as the main victim. He gives no detail of his journey or the reasons for it. He correctly identifies himself as the main initial target yet modifies the story to gain sympathy and detract from his actions. He widens the incident by stressing that Gibeah is from Benjamin, thereby appealing to tribal loyalties, prejudices and past grievances against Benjamin. He then changes a group of בני־בליעל into בעלי הגבעה; in doing so, he widens the conflict, making it sound legitimised by local rulers and thereby a reflection of the city as a whole, a normal state of affairs. This also elevates him to the rank of someone worthy of the enmity of the lords of Gibeah, someone they may be afraid of and therefore intend to kill. The whole episode is re-cast as an attempted political murder rather than a sordid episode of xenophobic crime. The distortion from sexual violence to murder is clearly crucial; the possibility of male rape is something he could not possibly entertain or acknowledge publicly. It is possible that he would have seen attempted murder as the greater crime and therefore worthy of greater punishment. He makes no mention of how his פילגש came to be the one victimised, and his own part within it. He does acknowledge her

ordeal, but presents his own predicament first, which casts a doubt on what Israel will actually be responding to: attempted murder, or rape and actual murder? He carefully avoids mention of murder regarding his פילגש, and tells of her abuse, death and dismemberment in an unemotional, matter-of-fact fashion in sharp contrast with Israel's shocked reaction. His account of the dismemberment is presented as a logical outcome, the obvious thing to do in response to such events, now termed נבלה in an echo of the old man's words. The normal reaction to the word however is expected: 'purging the evil out of Israel' (see 4.2.1.2). Israel is baited into a self-righteous response of self-defence against the enemy within, those who have compromised the integrity of the nation through such un-Israelite action.

Israel does not stop to ascertain facts or question his account. They do not ask what he may have done to protect his פילגש. They do not ask where he was staying and what his host had done to help (the old man and his dependents are likely to meet their death in Gibeah). They do not question the bizarre link between events and dismemberment. The Levite makes no appeal to or mention of Yahweh (Block, 1999, p. 554), and neither do the people gathered to listen; nor do they draw attention to the Levite's infringement of laws regarding dead bodies. Yahweh and the covenant are absent from both speech and response, so that unity and shared identity lie not in being the Covenant people, but in national pride and outrage against Benjamin. The Levite has turned his private tragedy into a crisis of national identity, and the people respond 'as one' (20.11).

It is unclear who 'all Israel' is in 20.1-11; sending out body parts to all the tribes would suggest Benjamin was included, yet this is unlikely in light of the Levite's speech and its accusations. The people's response implies there is nothing left to investigate and the course of action is set. 20.12-13 however records the accusatory message sent to Benjamin, asking them to hand over culprits, in keeping with Deut. 13. The message sent verbalises what the Levite was hinting at, the need to 'purge the evil from Israel' (20.13). The sending of messages implies Benjamin was not present at Mizpah, but it would have been more logically sent between the Levite's speech and the response, unless the response reflects a judgement already made, and the offer to Benjamin as nothing more than a nod to judicial processes. Such a belated offer could then explain Benjamin's refusal to hand over the culprits, in a response of wounded pride and fear of summary justice.

4.4.2.3. Speaking to God

Chapters 20 and 21 chronicle several addresses to Yahweh. First, in 20.18, they repeat a question from the opening of the book, 'who should go first' – and receive an identical answer: Judah. The parallel highlights an essential difference: in Judges 1.1, Israel goes to *Yahweh*. In Judges 20.18, they ask 'God'. The difference is subtle yet crucial in marking out the journey of Israel over the book, and introduces a note of uncertainty as to who exactly they are speaking to, and on what basis, if not using the name of the God of the covenant. In contrast, it is *Yahweh* who answers. The different terminology creates space for Yahweh to be *Other*, and to highlight how the people have distorted the covenant and their own understanding of a God who is not subject to their manipulations but does have an independent identity. Israel has changed; Yahweh has not. The question they ask is one of tactics: they have not been sent into battle by Yahweh, have no divine mandate, and do not seek the divine will. They seek victory and are treating Yahweh as a divinatory tool and tribal god. Yahweh's response is unsurprising: Judah shall go first, as before. Judah is the tribe of the פילגש, therefore the one most aggrieved, who should take the lead in defending their own. The divine direction implicitly focuses the tribes on the פילגש, as well as reflect a tradition of Judahite leadership. Interestingly, we never know whether Israel follows Yahweh's advice; we are simply told that *Israel* went out to battle (20.20). Only Yahweh mentions Judah, the tribe of the father and brothers of the murdered woman.

With defeat stinging, Israel cries out again in 20.23, this time to Yahweh, and asks a more open question, a tentative acknowledgement that battle may not have been the right choice. The phrasing of the question is interesting: instead of the simple 'the sons of Benjamin' of the first question, which marked out their difference, this time they speak of 'the sons of Benjamin, my brother'. It is slowly dawning upon Israel that this is not a war against external enemies, as in Judges 1.1, but a battle against their own. The switch from first person plural to first common singular further personalizes the question. Using 'we' in the first question diffuses communal identity and responsibility. Using 'I' emphasises the personal responsibility of the whole people, as well as give added strength to corporate belonging. The answer is not necessarily one we expect: Yahweh commands them to go into battle again. The purpose is unclear: is it because a terrible wrong needs to be recognised and avenged? Is it to 'purge the evil out of Israel'? Is it a recognition that Israel will go back into battle regardless? A test of their obedience? Or a lesson: Israel will learn that unless Yahweh gives them victory, they will not get it; and learn that Yahweh cannot be manipulated, cajoled or bought, as they face a second defeat.

After a second defeat, 'all the sons of Israel and all the people' (implying not everyone had participated before) now go back to Bethel; it is unclear what group this is referring to, whether warriors only, warriors and background support, or whether warriors, support, and all the people, men, women and children who could join them. The effect however is to heighten the sense of common purpose of an entire nation weeping before Yahweh. The cultic indications in a parenthetical note indicate that the people are moving back towards covenantal forms of prayer. Their prayer still is simply about battle and whether they should persist (to win) or desist (and give up altogether); it is about ensuring victory, not discerning right from wrong. Saying, 'should we desist' betrays their loss of confidence, and the possibility they may desist regardless. At this point, Yahweh assures them of victory, in a way that should re-establish his supremacy over battle.

The people's next encounter with Yahweh in 21.3 is not a celebration or renewal of covenant for their victory. They are now recriminating against Yahweh for allowing Benjamin to be cut off, and laying responsibility on 'Yahweh, the God of Israel' for the state of the nation. The choice of words for God suggests two things: they are trying to bring Yahweh back on their side, reminding him that he is their (tribal?) god and therefore the integrity of the nation is his responsibility; they are also deflecting responsibility and blaming Yahweh for their own choices and actions, actions they would have taken regardless of Yahweh's answer to their first question. Unsurprisingly, there is no answer, and no indication that the people were waiting for one. They had a plan already, and the question was partly rhetorical, possibly to assuage collective feelings of guilt through scapegoating. Interaction with Yahweh overall shows little sign of dialogue as the people are not seeking relationship but use prayer as a vehicle for mastery, over Benjamin, over their surroundings, and over their sense of responsibility and identity.

4.4.2.4. The Benjaminite problem: deliberating in Israel

Chapter 21 contains some speech, but little dialogue; speech is used for command rather than as a vehicle for increasing understanding or for creating a space for intersubjectivity. The subjectivity of the Other is instead systematically ignored or quashed in the speeches of chapter 21. The 'congregation' deliberates in 21.6-7, in a way that suggests they see the 'Benjaminite problem' as something for them to solve rather than something to work on with Benjamin; Benjamin is done-to. The congregation's words betray a lack of imagination as they phrase the present predicament as a logical inevitability: an oath was made. Nothing can be done. This is only their first conclusion, which will be undermined by their later plans for Shiloh. If it is possible to find two different solutions in chapter 21,

it is not unreasonable to assume there could have been others to explore. The congregation makes plans in 21.8-12. The instructions are self-contradictory; first they are told to put all to the sword, including 'women and children'; then they are told to put to the sword 'all the men and the women who have known a man by sleeping with him'. The instructions are precise, with use of a gloss to reinforce that the women to be put to death are the ones that are not virgins. Finding wives for Benjamin is not just about reproduction, but about ensuring *right* reproduction whose filiation is beyond doubt. Israel is taking it upon themselves to ensure the purity of the nation, through control of reproduction and wiping out undesirables. Meanwhile, they are oblivious to the increasingly absurd problems they are creating: striving for purity leads them to wipe out increasing numbers of Israelites who do not conform to the pure Israel of their imagined corporate identity. Then, breaking away from reported speech, we are told that four hundred women, virgins, were found, though this had not been explicitly stated in the voiced instructions. The inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead have not been spoken with, consulted or warned. Just like Benjamin, they are objects of speech and action.

The congregation has acted, yet the problem is not solved; it is now entrusted to a subgroup, the elders of the congregation (21.16). Their speech shows them as pragmatic, less concerned with overall purity than with practical outcomes. They reiterate the congregation's concerns and authoritative stance towards Benjamin in 20.16-17. Interestingly, while they assume responsibility for solving the problem, they externalise its cause through use of the passive: 'women were wiped out of Benjamin' (שמד in the *niphal*). Likewise, they state the problem as 'a tribe not be blotted out', then see themselves as powerless to act positively, 'we cannot possibly give them wives from our daughters'. It is the narrator who points out the problem is of their own making in a short aside reminding readers of the vow. The concern with Benjamin not being blotted out points to the supremacy of male genealogies; presumably there were plenty of Benjaminite women married to men in Israel, who had not been killed in the war. Their progeny does not count as Benjaminite, because it is men's genealogies that determine tribal identity.

The instructions of the elders to Benjamin further strengthen the feel of the speech as an elaborate self-justification. In contrast to the episode with Jabesh-Gilead, they do not advocate battle and wholesale killing, but will use the ghost of Jabesh-Gilead as a veiled threat to ensure the cooperation of the abducted women's families in 21.22. The use of

military vocabulary in describing the 'ambush' both highlights what could have happened (the women could have been captured through battle) and makes the subterfuge more acceptable to Benjamin by painting them as warriors rather than men overpowering defenceless girls. The elaborate explanation to the fathers and brothers works to ensure the long-term cohesion of Israel by enabling all involved to feel they have done what is right and not broken collective vows. The elders, unlike the congregation, can now portray themselves as having solved the problem peacefully, with no bloodshed, no breaking of oath, and no further damage to the integrity of Israel. This, of course, is their perception as all go back to their inheritance to resume life as normal, a perception challenged by the narrator's conclusion in the refrain.

4.4.3. Silence

Irigaray's analyses pay as much attention to silence as they do to speech, because silence forms the necessary background to the speech of the Other (1.2.2.1 and 1.2.3.1). The shape of the silence and the shape of speech cannot be understood in isolation. Silence in Judges 19-21 is expressed in two major forms, through the absence of spoken words, the silence of characters, and through narrative gaps, the silence of the narrator. Whether silence if positive or negative depends on context and intention, and whether silence is given, self-withdrawing to make space for the Other, or taken, an act of aggression by a subject asserting themselves at the expense of the Other (1.2.2.3).

4.4.3.1. Silence and the erasure of subjectivity

I have already commented on silence as part of narrative analysis (for instance, the Levite's silence in his father-in-law's house, then return into speech in an act of re-assertion of his dominance), but will now built further on these with regards to the silence of women, and the silence of God.

The silence of women

Women have no voice, despite being doorways in and out of war, despite the פילגש being the focal point of chapter 19 and object of 21. At the level of speech, this is a tale of relationships between men. However, the presence of women throughout points to their silence as the counterpoint of the tale, a silence that makes possible the surface interactions.

Women not being allowed speech makes it difficult for them to be subjects, rather than the object of male actions. The narration does allow brief windows of subjectivity to its women: the פילגש who commits some action perceived as זנה, undertakes a long and

dangerous journey alone, thereby asserting a choice that forces the Levite into an unexpected course of action. The Levite then seeks to reassert control through speech and action: he intends to go and persuade her, דבר על לב. The idiom is interesting since it does not refer primarily to an emotional appeal, but an appeal to the heart as the seat of reason (Chapter 3 note 10). The expression implies the possibility of intersubjectivity within the couple, a possibility brutally erased and replaced by the complete silence of the woman. Her silence is the canvas on which the relationship between men takes place: she brings the Levite into her father's house, in a final act of subjectivity until her body speaks out for her when normal speech and subjectivity have been inexorably removed. Had she spoken in her father's house, she would have interrupted the men's bargaining over her. As money of exchange, she has no currency of her own to bring to the table and can only provide what is needed for the men who 'own' her to bargain between themselves (1.2.3.2). The scene is repeated in Gibeah, when more men bargain over her body; the old man and Levite use her as money of exchange, whereas she has nothing and is therefore silent and powerless. Her silence, and the erasure of her subjectivity, is essential in the men's use of her: for the Levite to use her as shield for his own body and sense of self, and for the men of Gibeah to use her as a proxy for the Levite.

There is an interesting question regarding the narrator's choices here; did they report no speech because she was completely silent, or because her speech was ineffectual, or because the narrator was uninterested or dismissive? We know that the narrator of Judges does report women's speech, including that of victims, as we see with Jephthah's daughter, therefore the last option is unlikely. The contrast with Jephthah's daughter suggests that Israel has descended even further into moral chaos, since victims are no longer allowed to speak; the woman's complete silence fits the book's overall progression. Achsah spoke as subject and demanded a seat at the bargaining table, using her own status as money of exchange to further her chosen ends; Deborah spoke in leadership, Jael in war, the mother of Sisera in an ironic parody; the daughter of Jephthah did not protest against her father's decision, yet her words clearly placed responsibility on his own subject choices for her fate, and asked for a reprieve to mourn the life she had lost (11.34-40); by the time of Samson, his mother speaks yet is ignored, some women are silent (his murdered wife) whilst others are masters of speech for their own ends (Delilah). Here in chapter 19, after a brief flash of subjectivity, the woman whose story is told is silent, and her silence speaks out against the men who have silenced her. She is not fully silenced however, for the Levite intends her body to speak, and, in a final violation, to tell

a story that belies the truth; yet he cannot fully master the sign of the broken body, and what is communicated is ambiguous at best. At the level of the wider narrative, her broken body becomes symbolic of the dismemberment of Israel as a nation, in an implicit commentary and condemnation of the story that the men are telling publicly. She may not speak with words, but meaning still seeps through cracks and gaps and in-between spaces to speak of the feminine that has been erased (see 1.3.2.3).

Some feminist critics have argued that the silence of the פילגש means she is portrayed as a weak, willing victim, who fails to speak up for herself, or at least portrayed as having no right to do so:

> Women do not fight back, they do not try to get away, indeed the women's struggles and pain are not narrated. Women, even the violated ones, are as silent, compliant, as uninvolved as the narrator understands them to be. For in biblical law, rape is a crime against the father or husband of the woman. A woman has no right to initiate a trial. (Bach, 1998, p. 8)

Bach does not distinguish between the world of the characters and that of the narrator, and reads the depiction of an oppressive world as a prescription for it by the narrator; furthermore, she disregards crucial narrative details. The פילגש did try to get away, at the very beginning of the chapter. Her struggles and ordeal are indeed not narrated, though one may wonder whether narrating them would have risked turning readers into complicit voyeurs. Her perspective could have been conveyed, but would have needed to have been told as a woman's story to start with, with details of her inner life (details absent for all characters here and therefore not belonging to the narrative technique of the text). It would have been a powerful story. Here however we have a powerful story too: the story of the complete silencing of the women of Israel through brutality and oppression, and how the silencing of one woman is replicated at the level of the nation, in a time portrayed as the lowest ebb in Israel's history so far.

The other women of the text are silenced even more completely. The old man's daughter, threatened with the same fate as the פילגש, is never mentioned again, and forgotten by critics. Yet she was threatened with gang rape by her own father, and presumably meets her death in the immolation of Gibeah. She is one of the women 'wiped out', though not a Benjaminite. Women are simply included in the 'people' put to the sword in Gibeah, even though the word has generally only meant men so far in the narrative. The fate of the women of Gibeah and Benjamin would have been completely ignored had the crisis of

reproduction not occurred: they do not appear as persons alongside the men whose death is mourned. The women of Jabesh-Gilead's fate comes to the fore because of its use for the men's purposes; they are young, virgins, and their entire life and household have just been wiped out.

Bach (1998, p. 19) rails against the portrayal of the women of Shiloh, arguing that there is no struggle, no horror, and the narrative shows itself completely disinterested in their experience. Once again, whether her critique holds comes down to whether narrative judgement is present. My contention is that while the women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh are silenced and allowed no narrative subjectivity at the level of the plot, their fate is not ignored by the narrator. The careful parallel between 19 and 21 suggests that the narrator is inviting readers to read the fate of the פילגש into that of the women of 21. If this is so, then the use of women in men's affairs is likened to gang rape by a mob of worthless men, and begs us to consider the violence done to them, in the same way that the economical detail of the woman's hands on the threshold speaks of her desperate attempt to return to safety in a world where nowhere is safe for women.

The silence of Yahweh

Women are not alone in being silent and silenced in Judges 19-21; power struggles effectively silence male characters in succession too: the Levite in his father-in-law's house, the Levite and old man before the demands of the crowd, the inhabitants of countless cities put to the sword, and the men of Benjamin, silenced by Israel's greater force and narrative of who and how Israel is and should be. None of this is a constructive silence of voluntary self-limitation to make space for the Other; even the early act of subjectivity by the פילגש, her leaving, silenced the Levite unilaterally; whilst this may have been her only option for survival at the time, the fact still remains that no character voluntarily makes space for the Other to express who they are.

No character, except for Yahweh, and his silence is controversial at best. Silence here could be a sulky silence, an active withdrawal of presence in punishment, or an attempt to shape the relationship through restricting access to the one with greater power. Whilst all these are possible, and have been argued, I prefer to consider the narrative flow of Judges as a whole, which portrays Yahweh as taking the initiative to invite the people to follow the covenant, yet does not impose it, withdraws when the people reject his presence, but is ready to intervene in response to their cries of pain. Here in 19-21, the people of Israel have consistently attempted to control Yahweh and therefore denied his subjectivity

within the interaction. Yahweh does not yield to their attempts at determination, but acts both to preserve his own integrity as a God who cannot be manipulated, and to make space to allow the people to be who they want to be, rather than the people he would like them to be. As such, Yahweh models the possibility, even if rejected, of intersubjectivity, a possibility that must rest on respecting the integrity of both partners. This of course a matter of interpretation; however, I want to argue that Yahweh's initial withdrawal from battle was an invitation for the people to think and reflect on their identity and actions as Israel. His silence in response to the question in Shiloh is both a refusal to accept their definition of him, and an invitation for them to reflect further. The silence of Yahweh is therefore a result of Israel's attempts to control him and shape him to be a tribal god to be used by Israel; this cannot offer a sustainable base for relationships, and therefore Yahweh withdraws, leaving Israel to do 'what is good in their own eyes', that is, define their identity and actions independently, as if each person were self-contained and autonomous, each person a perfect incarnation of Irigaray's phallocentric totalitarian subject.

4.4.3.2. Narrative gaps

I have already identified a number of narrative gaps left by the narrator; some obvious, because the narrator fills them retrospectively, some less. I now want to assess how the use of gapping and narratorial restraint enables a story to be told that goes far beyond the words on the page.

The story is sparsely sketched; while it is set at the end of the book of the Judges, 'in those days', the later reference to Phinehas situates the story much earlier on chronologically. The writer makes no claims as to where the story fits; we only need to know it is pre-monarchical, and the conclusion of a spiralling descent into amorality. If the spiral is not chronological, then the epilogue suggests a different structure for the book as a whole, based around meaning, within which the conclusion can serve as both illustration and warning of what happens if and when Israel loses sight of the covenant. The lack of temporal markers creates a sense of generalisation of the conclusion: this may have happened to real people in real life, but the deliberate effort to subtract the episode from specific timings, alongside the namelessness that blurs characters into types, suggests a universal meaning for the episode that would have been difficult to achieve with a more precise narrative.

The same process operates at the level of characterisation. Enough is given for characters to be believable and not just foils, yet there are enough gaps that they could represent

any number of people. And readers are free to project different motives and situations onto them. So, for instance, we never know what really provoked the breakdown of the couple's relationship in 19.2; it could be unfaithfulness, it could be the Levite's controlling behaviour, or even domestic abuse. Leaving the gaps means that readers often fill them unconsciously, or close down apparent ambiguities with assumptions; the narrator's genius lies in their use of the narrative to surprise readers and prompt them to revisit the story and question earlier assumptions. Was the פילגש really unfaithful? What is unfaithfulness in a time when people only do what is right in their own eyes? How is unfaithfulness relevant to the rest of the story? Making assumptions leads readers to side with different characters; paying attention to the gaps and acknowledging our own biases as readers means that we can enter a place of meeting between ourselves and the text where meanings can be explored and created in ways that would not be possible had the text closed down meaning and avoided gaps. The gaps are essential in involving readers in an ethical and theological reading, because they allow the narrative to move away from binary interpretations into a greyer but more fruitful realm. Who is friend and who is foe? Are all characters equally 'guilty'? How do we give our sympathy as readers? The story prevents us from making easy judgements sorting characters between 'goodies' and 'baddies'. The reversal of likely sympathy for the פילגש and Levite should stand as a warning, that characters are rarely what we think at first glance; but also, that someone who behaves badly can also be a victim. Therefore, whilst it is quite natural, especially in a day when we are highly aware of gender issues and sexual violence against women, to see the Levite as archetypal villain, I do not think the narrator allows us to do this; the Levite is someone who, like all other characters, fails to honour the covenant. But he is also a victim caught in a frightening situation, whose identity was rocked to its core. He is a man who will incite war in indiscriminate revenge; yet the rest of Israel is responsible for responding to his call in disproportionate fashion and without investigating.

In the father's house, all manner of things are left unsaid. None of the exchange which we are led to expect from the intertext with Deuteronomy takes place. The young woman's behaviour is not questioned, the Levite makes no accusation, the father no protestation of innocence. Does her father not care enough about her to defend her? Was she innocent in the first place? Are פילגש not held to the same rules of behaviour as full wives? Or, in a world where everyone does what is right in their own eyes, do the men simply not care, and want the couple back together? Any of those are possible at the time of the initial

scene; the overall characterisation and narration give interpretation a steer, but ultimately, the narrator does not force readers to read along one perspective, but leaves enough gaps for them to make up their own minds.

The narrative is peppered with disappearing characters; the narrator does not comment on their fate, but careful readers may wonder. What happens to the old man and his daughter? Are they killed in Gibeah? If so, was it right for the old man to bear an equal punishment to the 'worthless men'? What happens to the Levite? Does he take up arms and participate in the war? Does he die on the battle field? Is he ever held accountable? What happens to his boy servant? Is he drafted into the war? What about the worthless men? What if they are amongst the surviving Benjaminites? The lack of detail here enables us to ask wider questions of what justice may be; what justice could there be for the woman? What would justice look like for the Levite? Even if the worthless men of Gibeah have escaped, they will have lost friends, kin, possessions, homes, and have to live with their guilt. Is this justice? The complexities of finding and enacting justice are enhanced by the lack of closure of the narrative as a whole. Whilst every man 'goes back to his inheritance and tribe', these tribes are decimated, the nation is in mourning, and all will have to live with the trauma of war; if one complains of the impact of the story on women being occluded, one must also argue that the impact on the men, whilst different, is occluded too, left for readers to ponder.

The incident in Gibeah, for all its horror, is also puzzling and mysterious. What were the men's motives? Frolov (2012, p. 320) suggests the reason may lie in the previous episode and the Levite of 17-18 robbing the Benjaminites of a place of worship. This is possible, but does not explain the sexual nature of the episode, and forgets that the man is not referred to as a Levite at all in Gibeah. It also makes little sense of why the men accept the *one* woman as a substitute, after having refused the offer of *two* women. Either the men were never that threatening, and therefore the Levite's actions unnecessary for self-defence; or something else is going on. The focalisation of the episode through the Levite's eyes means that we are not privy to the men's discussions. It also means that the rape scene is removed from the foreground. We know it happens, but the horror is left to our imagination, and forces readers into the safe inside place of the house, the place we implicitly condemn the men for keeping to themselves. Not allowing the readers 'out', and keeping them guessing and imagining, is another effective narrative technique that enhances discomfort with the events, and the place the men have chosen to take within it. Readers may not be voyeurs, but they are forced into the position of those who let

others be abused whilst staying safe, an effective strategy to prompt probing ethical questions, and suggest that all Israel, everyone, including the readers, participate in collective guilt.

The terse narration outside of the old man's house also serves to emphasise the woman's plight; the Levite's response stands out not just for its callousness and coldness, but for everything that is not said, everything that he, and the old man safe inside, and the women of the house, do not do. No-one, not even the girl who had been threatened with the same fate, comes out to tend to the פילגש. Once again, readers look on and are forced to wonder about the collective response to the story, and how the Levite's reaction, heinous as it is, actually represents Benjamin and Israel as a whole.

The confused account at the beginning of chapter 20 further extends the theme of collective guilt, and of events running out of control; it is unclear who is and who is not present, we are not made aware of the oaths taken at Mizpah, it is not clear what the tribes are actually going to war about. The lack of precision contributes to a picture of chaos and disintegration. Leaving gaps where, for instance, investigations and explanations should have been, also forces the readers into asking questions of Israel: why did they not try and find out more? Were they this eager for war? When the Levite tells his distorted story, attentive readers wonder at the gullibility and lack of discernment of the people: why don't they ask how the Levite got out of it alive? Why don't they question the appropriateness of the dismemberment? And if this is really all about the פילגש, why doesn't anyone make sure the real culprits are indeed singled out for punishment? And why is she never mentioned again? Her absence from the rest of the narrative is a glaring hole; the entire civil war is articulated around a woman who is missing from the narrative, around a gap, a hole, an absence. Which, in retrospect, makes her more conspicuous as a silenced victim, whose erasure stands in judgement over the nation.

Chapter 21 reinforces the questions raised by chapter 20. At the outset, as Israel gathers in Bethel and cries out to Yahweh, there is faint hope of a nation turning back to the covenant in horror at what it had become. The crying however is not over its own sin. The narrator fills two gaps that readers did not know were there, concerning two oaths, which begs the question, what else have we not been told? What other rash oaths and decisions has Israel made, that will come back to cause chaos and destruction later? The lack of investigation of 20 is repeated in 21; no-one enquires as to why Jabesh-Gilead had not

joined in the campaign; another punitive expedition is planned instead, with readers left to wonder about proportionality. When the men return with four hundred women, Benjamin's future should be assured, yet no-one questions the assumption that more women must be found so that every man has a wife. The silence and lack of reflection of the men of Israel underline their complicity in the fate of its women. The predicament of the abducted women is not explicitly discussed, but alluded to. The elders plan what to say to fathers and brothers coming in protest; they are never said to have needed to make those arguments however. Indeed, we may now think of another gap: none of the kin of the פילגש have appeared to speak up for her; no father, brothers, uncles, cousins, have spoken on her behalf in the assembly of Israel's men. None had taken an interest in her welfare earlier in chapter 19. Their absence ominously suggests that the daughters of Shiloh will be similarly abandoned.

By the end of the book, the nation has descended into chaos, and narrative gaps only serve to increase the readers' frustration at Israel's inability to consider even basic logical and ethical issues in its governance. But where the nation is silent or indifferent, the narrator creates the space for readers to ponder 'how such a thing could have occurred in Israel' in far more effective ways than if they had asked outright.

Exploring 19-21 in detail as a carefully crafted text has enabled us to discern some of the narrative strategies employed by the writer; strategies that create a multi-layered text whose gaps and subtext deconstruct the surface narrative of male power and domination. The narrator is often invisible, yet their use of a careful structure organised around gaps and invisibility, of multiple echoes, of ambiguity and irony invites readers to position themselves with respect to the text, to enter a space for interpretation that is never straightforward, but requires them to 'dwell upon' the text and the woman at its centre, and hear multiple cautions before daring to 'give counsel' or 'speak out'.

Chapter 5.

The Politics of Identity in Judges 19-21

Chapter 4 has demonstrated that the narration of Judges 19-21 is precise, careful and subtle, and opens up spaces for questioning the prevalent culture portrayed in the conclusion to the book. This final chapter will bring together the different threads of analysis into a consideration of the politics of identity in Judges 19-21, with particular reference to gender. It should be clear by now that issues of identity are at the centre of 19-21: questions of threatened identity, of private and public identity, of perceived, projected and actual identity, form both backdrop and key motivators behind a tale of abuse and war. Irigaray's work on identity and otherness can help unpeel the layers of the text beyond narrative techniques so that mechanisms of identity construction, with their attendant faultlines, illuminate the processes that lead to the widespread victimisation of women and men as gendered beings, and preclude true attentiveness to the Other. I will first explore how identity is constructed in the events of the text and through the narrator's telling, then more specifically the construction of the Other with regards to the self, before focusing on gender and gender-based violence. I will finish with a wider reflection on how this can help us interpret Judges as a theological text of relevance today.

5.1. Constructing public and private identities

5.1.1. The construction of identity

Irigaray rejects traditional definitions of identity as self-identity, or identity to the same (1.2.2.2). Her concept of identity is instead deeply relational, poised between nature and nurture, in the place where relationships modify, shape and transform a person into a person-in-relation. Such a concept sees identity as more fluid, and avoids the traditional dichotomies of sensible/intelligible, concrete/abstract, matter/form, living/dead, being/becoming. Identity is always in the process of becoming, as individuals are always in relation and renegotiating their position within their environment. Irigaray's approach, while initially directed at post-Socratic philosophical constructs of the self, can readily be used to analyse other cultural environments (2.3.1.1). The text of Judges 19-21 is littered with dualistic pairs being destabilised: safe/unsafe, public/private, home/outside, dead/alive, night/day, friend/foe, Israel/non-Israelite, victim/perpetrator, sinner/saint etc. The narrator resists placing characters in any of these stable pairs but instead calls us to

see the identity of individual characters, tribes and nation as shifting, unsure, and reconfiguring themselves in different environments and within different relationships. I will therefore explore how individual/private identity is linked to public/corporate identity, what horizons of being might be envisaged within the culture of the text, and how faultlines develop as individuals and nation struggle to 'become' the people whom they imagine themselves to be. Furthermore, the end of Judges, with its culture of unbridled individualism and emphasis on everyone doing what they saw right in their own eyes, is a perfect illustration of some of Irigaray's critique of the dangers of the autonomous self (1.2.1).

There is a tension here: Judges is set within a non-Socratic, pre-Hellenistic culture, whose concepts of identity are often seen as less individualistic. Meyers (1999, p. 36) argues that one cannot easily talk of individuals in Israel because in an agrarian society where all depended on one another, people experienced themselves relationally rather than individually, that this society was group-oriented rather than individual-oriented. The term 'orientation' however defines preference on a scale, rather than a binary classification; there is space for seeing the overall arc of Judges as moving from a more relationally aware culture to a more individualistic one, and Irigaray can help us analyse the consequences of such a shift.

5.1.1.1. Public vs private constructions of the self

The text of Judges 19-21 treats the first story as a microcosm of Israel as a whole, as a private story precipitates a similar story to be enacted at the level of the nation (4.1.2.2). As such, we need to explore the dynamics of public and private identity internally to each story, and at the level of the two stories together. The notion of personal *versus* corporate identity is intimately linked to questions of what is public and what is private (4.2.2.4).

It is interesting to see how the history of criticism has often dismissed chapter 19 as a 'private' or 'domestic' story and therefore of little interest (4.1.3), as if the domestic sphere has little to say about the political and public sphere and vice-versa. It is not surprising that this leads to a lack of consideration of the fate of the פילגש, or that of the women of chapter 21, since women have traditionally been relegated to the private sphere. This, however, is not the picture the text presents: two worlds as mirrors of each other, deeply related and impacting on each other. What happens to the פילגש in the realm of the family (and, indeed, in a public space, outside), has profound consequences for the entire nation. What happens to the entire nation has profound consequences for

the 'private' lives of the men and women forcibly married in chapter 21. Both traditional critics and the men and elders of Israel portrayed in the text show primary interest in the type of official history that Irigaray says privileges male values: their genealogies, their wars, their desire to possess and capitalise in order to assert power (with a focus on inheritance), the need for a household centred on a wife-mother, though one that remains object rather than subject to ensure the continued centrality of male concerns. The narrator's careful construction of the story however challenges the view that this is a story about men and their concerns only. Every part of the story has consequences for all people, in all spheres of life.

The story shows a concern for characters to confine gender and sexuality to the private domain. When women step out into the public domain, whether the פילגש in leaving the Levite, or the daughters of Shiloh going out to dance, they are brutally pushed back into their 'natural' place, reduced to their biological functions: to provide sexual pleasure and reproduction. The פילגש is reduced to a sexual object whose appearance in the public square has made her worthless; the women of Shiloh are used as insurance of a next generation. Women nowhere figure in the 'public scenes' of chapter 20 and 21 as subjects; the public square and its debates are the realm of men who control the configuration of society. When the Levite brings the question of family into public discourse, his account is carefully edited so that the family portrayed fits the public ideal; his speech eventually brings disaster on Israel and Benjamin, a disaster solved by the reaffirmation of social norms disrupted by conflict, as the newly-married Benjaminites and all other Israelites return to a picture of re-ordered domesticity: 'each returned from there to their tribes and families at that time, each man going back from there to his own inheritance' (21.24). The social window of 19-21 shows a world where both men and women exist in domestic spaces, but only men are allowed to develop beyond the private space into other roles, unlike earlier on in Judges. It would be unfair to say the narrator condones the picture of the conclusion of Judges; rather, the narrator graphically illustrates the change that has occurred in Israel, and the contrast invites readers to reflect, and judge.

The result of this delineation of public and private, as Irigaray argues, is to deprive women of social contingency: there are no spaces for women to relate to Others of their own gender and develop within a wider of horizon of what it means to be 'woman'; nor is there space for them to relate from within their horizon *as women* to men as Others

within the horizon of *their* gender since all relationships are reduced to the local and domestic, the specific instantiation rather than a wider, social and public horizon (Irigaray, 1987a, p. 126). As a corollary, there is no vehicle for either gender to relate to the Other as *Other*. The only public relationship articulated is one of dominance by the men, who define the women's identity through the private relationships they engineer. Women therefore are never shown in relation to one another in the text; they lose female genealogies, and through the loss of those, the connection to their gender horizon. There is no space to mediate the public and private for either gender. Instead, the impact of the one on the other is largely ignored by characters, though highlighted by the narrator.

Paradoxically – and ironically – the Levite provides the link between both worlds, by elevating his personal story to the status of national crisis; in so doing, he affirms that the intrusion of the public (i.e. the 'Lords of Gibeah', as a recognisable public entity) upon the private (him and his פילגש, now an isolated couple) is an indicator of degeneracy in Israel. Interestingly, he does not represent this as a private violence of the men of Gibeah as individuals onto his private sphere; this is an attack by a publicly recognisable group onto the *whole* of Israel. What has transpired in Gibeah is therefore something that threatens the core identity of the people assembled there. This destabilisation works at two levels; first, his identity *as a man* has been threatened both by his פילגש leaving and by the thought of homosexual rape, though he cannot admit this in public. He therefore transfers the threat to him as a man to the threat to his national identity as an Israelite. Second, the threat he identifies in his speech, replicated in the threat of wifeless Benjaminites, is to the strict private/public order that enables men to act as men in the public sphere by maintaining women in the private sphere; it is this threat to which the Israelites react twice and seek to eliminate. This could work as a threat on two levels for the nation. It could undermine a social order in which men rely on women to be their dark matter and necessary for their ability to launch themselves autonomously as men into ventures beyond the domestic sphere (1.3.1). However, in a society where the family is central to passing on the covenant to the next generation (Reeder, 2016, p. 22), a disintegration of family, and the threat by what is deceivingly portrayed as a 'public' group to the family of the Levite become a threat to all families and threaten the very basis of Israel's transmission of national identity. In this sense, when Israel functions properly, the family is the locus of the articulation of public and private. The picture of Judges 19-21 is that of a nation where this has fallen apart and therefore both public and private realms disintegrate.

5.1.1.2. National and political identity

Chapters 19-21 delineate public and private matters, defining political and national identity as public matters. The whole of Judges is a consideration of the identity of Israel: are they the people of the covenant who renewed their commitment at the end of Joshua? How is this identity worked out – or not – as they settle the land? We see this concern in 19-21 with the cluster of corporate terms: Israel, men/sons of Israel, Benjamin/sons of Benjamin, people, tribe, clan, congregation, assembly, and the tension between all of those: tribe against tribe, tribe against Israel, person against person, men against men. The cluster of terms also represents the nexus of relational terms that shaped ancient Israelite identity: the people (עם) who came together as assembly (קהל) or congregation (עדה), made up of the twelve tribes (שבט), themselves made up of clans (משפחת), made up of the 'house of the father' (בית־אב). The preponderance of family terms to refer to national and public identity (sons, brothers), corroborates Block's argument that 'pre-monarchic Israelites perceived themselves as one large extended kinship group' (1999, p. 32). As such, the use of the story of the פילגש as trope for that of Israel is eminently appropriate. The struggle faced by Israel as it wrestles with national identity is what Irigaray (1994a) identifies as the struggle to enter into ever-larger groups, which creates the need for ways to 'return to the self in proportion to the distancing from self which entry into an enlarged community implies' (p. 51). The issue here is the split between 'natural state', identity as experienced relationally in the day-to-day, and the link to an abstract, communal identity whose shape is largely decided outside the self, and, for the majority, by others. In Judges, we see the clear tension between this local identity, based on primary kinship, in tension with what it means for Israel to be Israel, the people of the covenant; the tension is obvious when the covenant is not lived out at local level, and in relationship to the people with whom they share the land. Then, 'Israel' becomes a theoretical concept, an idealised identity with little relevance to the local and particular. We see the disjointed nature of local and national identity in Judges in the conundrum over Benjamin as local problem versus Benjamin as part of the theoretical entity 'Israel'. One of the vehicles the people use to 'return to the self' is precisely the metaphor of extended kinship as a way of understanding their wider identity, though the faultlines are obvious. The problem they face, expanded throughout Judges, is the lack of correspondence between Israel as the people of Yahweh, and the practice of covenantal faithfulness at local and personal levels.

Political identity and the Other

As Israel struggles with national identity, we must remember Irigaray's caution: 'social changes are not the same as identity changes. The constitution of the deeper self necessarily comes into being with language, images and representations' (Lotringer and Irigaray, 2000, p. 52): merely coming out of Egypt and entering into a covenant with Yahweh does not effect an immediate identity change; the story of Joshua and Judges is a story of how identity shifts and evolves – and struggles to do so – at a deeper level. In Judges 19-21, the underlying current is the failure of the reconfiguration of national identity: the people have not become the people of the covenant, which can be seen through their language and representations of themselves. Instead, there is a struggle between different pulls on their identity and self-representation. So, in the response recorded in 19.30 and the beginning of chapter 20, we have a simultaneous use of covenant language and concepts (purging the evil out of Israel), and a denial of the fundamental reality and basis of the covenant: 'since the sons of Israel came out of Egypt', instead of the covenantal formula, 'since Yahweh brought the sons of Israel out of Egypt'. If identity is constructed relationally, then relationship with Yahweh is only one key relationship in the constitution of Israel's identity, one that is at times less significant than others.

Israel's identity struggles are clearest in the way in which they define themselves over and against the one they consider Other. Throughout Judges, this is often through violent clashes with the Other, whether this Other be external or internal, as Reeder (2016) argues: 'Identity is fluid and not only over and against the foreigner but in the same way that physical force is used against the 'nations' it can be turned against errant members of the family' (p. 7). This description fits with the traditional psychological argument that the definition of identity, of the self, is necessarily violent, a necessity Irigaray contests (1.2.2.3). Here at the end of Judges violent processes are clearly at work to defend communal identity from perceived threats. The internal nature of the threat helps to explain the disproportion of the violence. The people of Israel have a clear sense of who they are against the Canaanite Others; hence the Levite vehemently refuses to spend the night in Jebus, a city Israel hasn't fully conquered yet (Joshua 15.63). It is precisely this earlier contrast that enhances the irony and the horror of Gibeah. Gibeah was chosen as 'one of us': the Levite wanted a city with 'sons of Israel', who would see him not as Other or stranger, but one of them. Instead, the despised and feared Others may have been a safer option as Benjaminite kin treats the Levite as Other. A cognitive dissonance is

therefore set up between perceived and performed identity. The like-self have behaved as the not-self, the opposite, the dark mirror image of Israelite identity, which threatens the perceived identity both of the ethnic Other (Jebus) and the self (Israel). The boundaries between self and Other have blurred, so that a hint of shared identity now threatens the clear demarcation of self and Other.

Who is Israel?

The expectations of characters reveal a sense of who Israel 'should' be: people who welcome their kin and respect a Levite by recognising his public status. The overall sense of national identity in Judges comes through with the high frequency of use of 'Israel', of pan-Israelite expressions such as 'all Israel/the sons of Israel/the men of Israel', the frequent naming of the tribes that make up the nation, and talk of Israel as 'the people' as opposed to Others (Block, 1999, p. 30). These features are prominent in 19-21. Judges as a whole however uncovers an inconsistent national identity, as the various stories that refer to 'Israel' invariably involve only a few tribes whose distribution is ever changing. The Levite in chapter 20 accomplishes what has never happened since Joshua: bringing all the tribes together for one purpose. Except, it is the wrong purpose, and one tribe is not included: the identity of Israel has been subtly redefined again. In the flow of the three chapters however, we have a sense of all the people, the sojourners, the aliens, the disparate tribes coming together at last, and their separate, local identities merging into one as we are told repeatedly that Israel is acting 'as one man'. Local identities and filiation are no longer acknowledged, they are simply, 'the sons of Israel'. Identity is no longer defined over and against pagan nations, but over and against Benjamin.

Interestingly, whilst the effect of the language is to portray the whole of Israel assembled, it is clear that this national identity only applies to some: women, children and non-warriors are not included. The construction of public identity is achieved by a sub-section of Israel and reflected back onto the whole. Only men participate in active military decision-making and action, have the power to define who 'Israel' should be. The issue then partly undergirds the problem of enacting a national identity that is only theoretical for large parts of the population. This theoretical identity is then enforced in a way that takes Israel further from covenantal identity, to punish one of their own instead of occupying the land.

That this identity is theoretical is shown in Israel's fragmentation: with the Benjaminites, with Jabesh-Gilead, with Shiloh. At every level, a gap opens between Israel's concept of

who it is and its performance of identity. At one level, they see themselves as the people who came out of Egypt and whose allegiance is to their tribal god; the ideal narrative is that enshrined in Torah, yet it is not the narrative that shapes Judges 19-21. They refer little to Yahweh, often not by name, and seek no relationship with Yahweh. Rather, they seek his reinforcing of their tribal/national identity, giving them victory because they are Israel, rather than because their cause is just. A large fissure looms between belief and ethics, and the question of who this God is they are praying to: Yahweh or idol. The desired identity of the nation is that of extended family who welcomes members of other tribes, yet this is proved untrue in Gibeah. The difference between the shape of national identity at the beginning and end of Judges is salient, as Schneider (1999) argues:

> The text does not state that they gathered before the deity, or requested the deity's advice, or even prayed to the deity. To a certain extent this defines the community differently at the end of Judges than at the beginning. At the beginning of the book the Israelites were defined as a people with a shared history and their relationship with the deity was based on acts the deity had carried out on their behalf. (p. 266)

At the end of Judges, they are defined by a perceived common enemy, then an idealised view of perfect Israel as the twelve tribes together as one nation each living in their separate inheritance. The return to the inheritance marks another feature of identity: the identification with the land and its layout (the tribes came out of Egypt and are now settling Canaan). At every turn in Judges, the explicit threat that faces Israel is that of losing the land, until Judges 19. There, the threat is internal. Israel's covenantal identity, whilst under threat, still shapes the thinking of the nation, as we see with the reference to 'purging the evil out of Israel'; lying under the surface may be the threat from Leviticus, that should they not obey the commandments, and should the land be defiled, the land would 'vomit them out' (Lev. 18.25, 28; 20.22). The risk of losing the land that shapes their identity is both external and internal; yet chapter 19-21 reveal the sad irony that the people have failed to realise throughout the book of Judges, that external threats are let loose because they had departed from the covenant in the first place. In 19-21, on the surface, the people start to address the internal threat, the evil in their midst, yet their lack of repentance, their failure to turn to Yahweh and the re-enactment of 19 into 21 shows that their perception of what constitutes evil and how to address it, are utterly mistaken. The people prove themselves to be more un-Israelite than ever, despite focusing on a perceived ideal of a pure national identity.

5.1.1.3. Personal identity

Discerning the movement of personal identity is more complex in Judges 19-21, since individual characters only appear in 19. Their namelessness is a further obstacle, as all characters are reduced to their function and relational ties, which shift and change as the story progresses and events are focalised through different characters (4.3.2.1). Whilst Irigaray says little about proper names, she does insist on the importance of persons being both named and namers, so they can be I and You, *Je* and *Tu* (1.2.2.1). Without this double movement, there is no possible access to subjectivity. As the פילגש is silent throughout, and the story is only briefly focused through her eyes, if at all, there is little space to explore her subjectivity, or that of any of the women in the narrative. We can observe how characters develop and express personal identity through their interactions, though these observations will be generic rather than specific.

Male identity

The main indicators of personal identity in the text are tribal relations, where people are from and where they live; relational identity is further expressed in the interactions that develop within the story. As most of the characters are male, and male characters are best developed, we see male identity worked out proactively, in word and action, whilst female identity is specularised through the men's gaze: their reaction to the women, their assumptions, the narrative movements that lead them to act in certain ways. Women's identity is therefore either defined by the men as the non-male (the non-warrior, the sexual object, the non-public), or coming through the gaps of the narrative, in unexpected places with brief flashes of subjectivity. This fits Irigaray's definition of phallocentric systems, which privilege symmetry in building definitions of self; the feminine becomes either the inverted Other to the masculine subject, a lack, or a place of irruption of the male's desire (1.2.1.1). This system fundamentally precludes the possibility of real otherness, a feminine and masculine articulated not as a negation of the Other, but as an encounter.

Specularisation and defining identity through the mirror of the inverted Other allows the Subject to be in control of identity by marking out identity as fixed, and preventing the Other from challenging fixed concepts. This works itself out on two levels. First, all women are 'the same' except for some vague flaws or familial qualities, whilst men are encouraged to make their mark and represented as such (1.2.3.2). In Judges 19-21, this dynamic is at work in the suppression of the woman who did not fit the mould (by being a פילגש; by being unfaithful; by leaving; by trying to re-enter the old man's house, the space

she had been excluded from) and the reduction of all others to the role of virgins and potential wives. Meanwhile, men are individualised in the story of 19, with decisions of their own and access to subjectivity (though I would qualify Irigaray's point in that men also conform to certain expectations and patterns of being, however wide and exciting these may be). Second, denying women subjectivity is essential so they can be constructed as objects, fixed points against which men can measure themselves. Women are expected not only to conform, but to reinforce the male story of identity; otherwise constructs of masculinity become threatened. In Judges 19, as the פילגש shows subjectivity, she threatens the Levite's sense of self, not simply in terms of their interpersonal relationship, but in terms of the right ordering of his social world. She has stopped being a mirror within which he can see himself as man by seeing her as the woman who ensures his domestic life.

The Levite's story starts as a story of separateness, with few ties and much alienation, where the otherness of the פילגש, her real otherness, has disturbed the expected relational pattern and provoked a series of events when nothing is as it 'should be', and all relationships are disturbed: her father is neither protective nor outraged; the people of Gibeah do not behave as Israelites; the Levite does not tell the truth or lead people towards Yahweh; Israel almost annihilates Benjamin; the fathers of Shiloh cannot protect their daughters… In a story where his identity is constantly threatened, the rape of the פילגש functions as a safe point of return: the פילגש is a woman, used as a woman, with no subjectivity, while the Levite is a man who has reasserted his dominant position and personal safety, and will further reassert himself as Israelite and righteous over and against the 'worthless men' of Gibeah.

The Levite operates as an autonomous subject: he affirms his desired identity as Israelite identity, as Levitical, though this is not borne out relationally, something Irigaray regards as typical of the attempt of the phallocentric subject to control the whole of reality through concept and ideas (1.2.1.1). He is an Israelite, and constructs this over and against those who are not, the Jebusites. He is a Levite and may see himself as deserving special honour, or at least, basic hospitality. This perceived, theoretical identity is challenged relationally in Gibeah. The dynamic between the Levite and the old man shows the construction of male identity as they bond together to the exclusion of their women-folk, only brought in at the point of need; furthermore, the old man appeals to common male identity with the men of Gibeah to save himself and the Levite: 'my brothers…' (19.23).

When bonding through a theoretical shared identity fails, the old man and Levite resort to embodied relational bonding: in offering the women and sacrificing the פילגש, the two men enact a common identity with the would-be rapists of Gibeah. They have used women as the gateway towards safeguarding themselves. A real, instantiated link has been created between them. At this moment of bonding, the two men become participants in the gang-rape. When the men of Israel later plot the abduction and forced marriage of the girls of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh, they re-enact the same story of bonding over the use and abuse of women whose subjectivity is brutally erased. As a result, a picture develops, of male identity being constructed violently through their relationships with women and other men, a picture the narrator has directed our attention to.

The war against Benjamin foregrounds other aspects of the construction of male identity. The words בני ישראל, ישראל, and איש ישראל are used interchangeably, and within those, no individual emerges. The overall effect is of a shared identity that is unavoidably male and does not brook difference, as in the treatment of Benjamin and Jabesh-Gilead. The Benjaminites are treated with more respect as they are constantly recognised as אנשי־חיל (20.44), for their military prowess (20.16). In contrast, the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead are cast as traitors to the cause and simply put to death, without fanfare or acclamation. War enables male bonding and the definition of male identity, as Washington (1997) notes: 'Near Eastern martial values inscribed in the Hebrew Bible, where a capacity for violence is synonymous with manliness, and where violence against a feminine object, above all, consolidates masculine identity' (p. 326). War has erased all traces of women in the narrative in Judges 20: the activity is exclusively reserved for men as they fight for domination of the public space that will allow them to define who the 'sons of Israel' are. Washington argues that war is depicted in masculinist terms, with defeat and subjugation portrayed as a feminine counterpart, but this is not obvious here, unlike in earlier war passages in Judges, where the enemy are feminised, or ridiculed for being beaten by women (Judges 4-5; 9). This relies on constructs of masculinity that represent males as active and dominant, and create the context within which sexual and gender violence flourish. Men's identity in war and peace is closely linked, as the 'ideal' of the man of war then forms part of the symbolic system and grammar of discourse (Scholz, 2010). The rape of the women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh comes as a natural consequence of a hyper-masculinist ideology of war and the identification of women with the defeated enemy to be subjugated.

The final question to derive from the episode is, what is the function of such a tale of masculinity within a sacred text? The answer depends on how we view the narrator; my contention is that the narrator describes but does not condone the excesses and abuses of his culture. Indeed, a faultline looms large between the men's concept of who they are as Israel, and the ironic portrayal of their actions as replicating the worst excesses of the Canaanites, actions which separate them from Yahweh, the very source of Israel's identity. Feminist critiques often argue that as God is largely portrayed as male in the Old Testament, the oppressive male values of the text are reinforced by the association of God and masculinity. If a faultline opens between the two however, where does this leave concepts of masculinity? In the text, Yahweh is the object of the people's manipulation, and chooses to withdraw: not a traditional male behaviour. Hence this apparently 'masculine' God does not share the overbearing masculinity epitomised by the 'sons of Israel'. Eilberg-Schwartz (1994, p. 20) further points out that the identification of male and God fails to recognise that men are feminised in Biblical discourse by being the object of divine desire; in the Yahweh-Israel relationship, Yahweh is the husband, and Israel (composed of men and women, but whose public identity is narrated, created and represented by men) is the bride. Eilberg-Schwartz then argues that this is a source of tension for the men and a reason for the exaggeration of the male-female difference in Israel, an act of symbolic displacement of male tensions and contradictions onto women. The subtle narration of 19-21 gives grounds for readers to reflect on unhealthy patterns of identity formation in Israel, and the gap between Israel's perception of itself as God's people and the reality of what being God's people would mean in practice. Theologically, it gives us tools to critique the male overidentification with the divine.

Female identity

In the story of the פילגש, picking up the reverse threads of the male construction of identity, and listening to gaps and faultlines, we can identify official constitutions of female identity and unactualized possibilities for female subjectivity. Because of the complete absence of female voices, we have no access to individual or collective female self-representation. Women's graphic exclusion from speech in 19-21 symbolises a deeper denial of access to language-making; whilst the men define both their own and the women's identity through self-representation, through exchanges between men, and through the use of the feminine as negative image, the women, in contrast, have no access to systems of representation of their own (1.2.3). The language and symbolism available are those of the world that surrounds them, within which they do not tell their

own stories in their own words. Glimpses of the feminine are therefore seen through the masculine grammar of discourse only.

While this works at the level of the world portrayed within the text, we must ask whether this is true at the level of narration as well; is the narrator male, and using phallocentric discourse? The answer again rests partly on how we assess the narratorial voice. However, it also goes beyond this to ask whether it would have been possible for a woman to have narrated the story, and if it had, in the world of Ancient Israel, whether she would have had access to alternative systems of representation. Following Irigaray does not lead one to argue that a female narrator would necessarily be less phallocentric. Where discourse and language derive from a phallocentric world, creating new ways of speaking takes years and can only be done in dialogue with the Other, so that neither male nor female control identity or language-shaping, but these becomes a joint endeavour (1.3.3.4). Therefore, were the narrator male (as is historically most likely), his reticence to portray female subjectivity (to which he has no access) is more respectful than representing a projected female subjectivity imagined by the grammar of male discourse. Additionally, women can fall into the trap of the 'totalitarian subject' just as easily as men, simply reversing the polarity of oppression without challenging its instruments or fundamental grammar (1.3.3.2). Considering the Biblical text therefore, one needs to acknowledge that the world represented suggests a narrator deeply embedded in its overall culture, using the conventions and representations that have meaning for their readers; yet in Judges 19-21 there are signs of narratorial discomfort with the world represented, and the story is told in a way that fosters questioning of the overall grammar of discourse, specifically in its gender dynamics. As such, the text shows what Irigaray argues has been the case over time and space: faultlines within phallocentric discourse that have allowed different subjectivities and otherness to be glimpsed and hinted at, though not fully developed (2.2.3.2), and the shape of patriarchy and phallocentrism cannot be assumed to be the same in all places and at all times (1.3.2). Where those faultlines and gaps occur, they are an indication of the 'space between', the place where two subjectivities could meet and encounter each other, rather than deny the distance between them.

The פילגש is an embodiment of some of these gaps; I have already analysed the way in which women are used as money of exchange, and categorised as virgins, mothers or prostitutes (4.2.2.3). The פילגש however is not virgin, nor mother, nor prostitute in a

literal sense, and the narrator leads us to question whether she has been unfaithful. Her distribution to the crowd then works as a parody of a pimp hiring out a prostitute, in an attempt to force the woman into a conceivable category of thought. Yet she resists categorising and instead inhabits a space between, hinting both at the possibility of an alternative female identity to the roles decreed by male-dominated societies, and the irreducibility of the Other: her body will speak out with its own message, send out its own confused and ambiguous signals, however much the Levite has tried to suppress her identity. And her story will then force a re-interpretation of chapter 21 as girls, נערה like her, are sorted through by whether they have known (ידע) a man, the same word used for rape in chapter 19. The parallel wording suggests that the women share a common identity that goes beyond their sexual status, whilst also chillingly hinting at the confusion surrounding sexual activity that uses the same word for consensual and coerced intercourse. Sexual activity is represented from the point of view of the man's experience of it, rather than the woman's; or, rather, the initiator's experience, since the Levite was equally threatened by coerced intercourse.

Chapter 21 graphically represents the women's value in male exchanges and their definition through sexual status in the Jabesh-Gilead incident. Their identity is based on their usefulness and relationship to the men of Israel. Intra-gender relationships, unlike with the men, are not represented. There are no women relating to other women, apart from, possibly, the glimpse of the women of Shiloh dancing together, though this is still a corporate activity, and one which turns them into targets and victims. No mothers relating to daughters are represented, and women are cut off from the possibility of relating back to their fathers' house: the פילגש is taken away from hers, the women of Jabesh-Gilead's families are killed and houses burnt, the fathers of the women of Shiloh are prevented from exercising their rights and protection. Women in 19-21 are effectively cut off from any social contingency and channelled into exclusive relationships to their husbands. Developing a sense of interdependent gender identity is therefore impossible, as they are solely there to serve the needs of the (new) head of the household, the husband and future father. The lack of female genealogies is particularly salient when contrasted with stories of men and their mothers in Judges: the mother of Micah and the mother of Samson both play an active narrative role, whilst others are mentioned as relevant to their sons' social position (the mother of Jephthah, a prostitute; the mother of Abimelech, a Schechemite פילגש). Women here, in contrast, simply pass on from their father's house

to their husband's. Therefore, in addition to having no vehicle for public identity, the women have no possibility for a private identity that goes beyond their role towards men and children; they are *only* virgins and potential mothers. The erasure of female genealogies highlights Irigaray's picture of man using the 'virgin matter' of woman to construct his 'world of tomorrow', where only his world will be acknowledged and remembered (1.3.3.1); yet, through the telling of the story, the narrator redresses the balance a little by ensuring we know how the descendants of Benjamin, and, therefore, King Saul, will have come into being: through the violence done to the women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh. The text therefore functions as witness even though the story itself is one of erasure.

The namelessness of the פילגש highlights how her identity is defined by the men around her: פילגש or woman when the narrative is focalised by the Levite, young girl when focalised by her father. She is never herself, always an accessory to others, defined by them. The namelessness of other characters however shows that at a deeper level, male identity is not known either, but defined by their need to see the Other as their negative, their prop for identity construction. The terms that describe the Levite fluctuate depending on who he is relating to: husband, son-in-law, master.

We must now explore how this relate to Irigaray's concept of relational identity. Relational identity is an acknowledgement that identity is shaped in the interaction of biological and cultural factors expressed through relationships. Identity is therefore never constituted independently or autonomously by a subject, and cannot be simply chosen or changed unilaterally (1.2.2). The fact that identity is formed relationally demands an exploration of how these relationships have operated, and of the differential impact of different relationships. Judges 19-21 shows that identity is formed relationally, but that the process works differentially for men and women, and is not a collaborative process of encounter but one of violent imposition of the One over the Other, in terms of gender, but also ethnicity and at times across generations.

Women are represented as non-men; women do what men do not (have children), they are the passive partner who is known by the male, sexually and symbolically. Their identity is narrated by the men and their needs obliterated. Women in Judges 19-21 are where the men need them to be, and when they are not (because of unfaithfulness with the פילגש, or death with the women of Benjamin), chaos ensues and order must be

restored through the reaffirmation of women's place in the social order (as sexual object for the פילגש, as brides for the daughters of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh). There is no place in-between the sharp divisions between male and female social roles for a different subjectivity to be allowed to emerge. The negation of the 'space between' is graphically portrayed by the פילגש lying with her hands across the threshold, reaching out for connection whilst the door remains firmly shut; when the door opens, she is moved away and dismembered in a complete refusal of intersubjectivity.

The representation of both men and women suggests a world within which true intersubjectivity is impossible, because the rules of interaction created preclude true dialogue. Interactions are pre-scripted and defined by what it means to be a man, a woman, an Israelite, a father, a warrior, an elder, etc. There is no possibility of journeying towards the Other in openness; the Levite *has to* turn away from Jebus as his identity as Israelite demands; he *has to* do whatever he can to protect his sense of identity as a man in Gibeah and therefore use his פילגש as a shield (implied but not said in his speech); Israel *has to* fulfil its oaths, and then *has to* find wives for Benjamin. At every turn, the people are represented as caught by a logic of their own making, so that possibilities are reduced and minimised. The genius of the narrator is to highlight those patterns of thought whilst demonstrating the irony of where they lead (abuse and destruction) and suggesting they were never the only solution through the use of intertextuality.

5.1.2. Identity threatened

I now turn to examine how identity is threatened in 19-21, and how these threats drive the narrative. Threat and loss are woven into the whole of Judges, as Hudson (1994) argues: 'Judges is about loss: a loss of the individual which leads to a loss of the tribe, and, if circumstances remain unchecked, a loss of the nation. The narrative chronicles and reflects a rapidly disintegrating society that was oblivious to a gradually disappearing God' (p. 49). Loss pervades the epilogue, together with fear: of the Other, of dispossession, of defeat, of annihilation. Irigaray points to the presence of the Other as inherently destabilising and potentially threatening; relational identity means that our narratives about who we are, are shaped by those around us and our particular positioning in time and space. These narratives explain reality by positioning Others, events, the world, with respect to ourselves, and ourselves with respect to these other factors. She calls these narratives 'temporal weaving' (1.2.2.2). Meeting the Other creates a 'tear in our temporal weaving' (Irigaray, 2008b, p. 80), by introducing an element that forces us to rearrange

the narrative to include something unexpected and not controlled by us. From there, a constructive dialogue can ensue, enabling the two subjectivities to modify their temporal weaving in a collaborative and creative encounter; alternatively, our identity can be absorbed by that of the Other, so that their temporal weaving masters ours; or, we can attempt mastery by dictating the terms of the encounter and absorbing their narrative into our own more powerful narrative. In Judges, the narrative of unstable identity, with unstable relational groupings, makes characters more susceptible to respond negatively to threats to their temporal weaving.

5.1.2.1. Gender identity threatened
Judges 19

The פילגש issues the first challenge to identity as she commits זנה, and leaves. Betrayal always challenges identity and the way in which we narrate our place within relationships. Here, within the context of Ancient Israel, the woman's actions present specific challenges to the Levite's identity *as a man*. In a world where chastity was an indicator of the social worth of a girl's family and the men within it (see the intertext with Deut. 22), loss of chastity (real or imagined) implies that the men have failed as men, by not safeguarding their women (Frymer-Kensky, 1998, pp. 84-85). Irigaray (1974, p. 147; 1982, p. 61) explores such logic of thinking carefully, and argues that women need to be the mirror that reflects the image of who men want to be, and support blindly the attributes that men consider valuable in men, whether war, power or marriage (1.2.1). The פילגש expresses subjectivity and independent action, and thereby ceases to be a fixed mirror. The Levite depends on her both to reflect what he needs to see, and for others to see him as he wants to be seen. Second, she shatters the image of the man as *necessary*, both by expressing desire for another and by leaving him. In Freudian terms, she denies the 'penis envy' that Freud argues motivates women. Irigaray does not buy into Freud's description of female psyche; she does however agree that he describes the grammar of discourse woven by a phallocentric consciousness; therefore, at some level, men are dependent on the *idea* of penis envy to establish themselves as necessary. The concept further makes female desire dangerous, because as a woman exercises subjectivity, the object of her desire is not within male control. Hence masculinity is dependent on the concept of female desire/envy, yet needs to suppress it as dangerous (Irigaray, 1974, p. 61). The story of the פילגש fits this logic as she desires something else than the Levite (another man, or

simply another life). Her desire brings about chaos and death, in a well-rehearsed traditional motif which culminates in Gibeah.

Gibeah precipitates the main crisis of the passage for the Levite, already vulnerable in terms of identity and social positioning. The men's demand to 'know' him constitutes not just immediate danger, but a challenge to everything the Levite perceives himself to be: an Israelite, one of them; a man, not a woman; a Levite, someone of status who deserves respect; safe in his own country. What the men are demanding amounts to a complete erasure of identity, a complete *othering* of the man by emasculating him and putting him in the sexual position normally occupied by a woman (being known), and under the threat of violence normally exerted against foreigners in war (see Niditch, 2008, p. 193; Stone, 1996, p. 76). He is *othered* both as a man and as an Israelite, his identity inverted. Women's identity is clearly marked out against men's. They are not just of less value and replaceable worth, but should appropriately be victims, passive, done to, known. At another level, the threat of the men of Gibeah also endangers his fundamental narrative about Israel and thereby himself: Israel are people who do not do 'such a thing'; the men of Gibeah's demand tears apart his national sense of morality and concept of how Israel is known through its actions.

The episode further compounds the threat to his masculinity levelled by his פילגש; he cannot fulfil culturally-defined masculine norms (Stone, 1996, p. 73). He is placed into the position of object of exchange and bargaining, the position women normally occupy. Hence the offer of the old man is not good enough: while it rescues him from physical abuse, it does not restore his position as a man between men. Seizing his פילגש and throwing her out enables him to restore himself as in control and in the position of a man, using women as money of exchange in a contest between men. This dynamic also explains why the men first refused the offer of the two women but accepted the פילגש: they were not bargaining with the old man for an outcome. They were intending to humiliate the Levite. The old man's daughter was irrelevant to their overall outcome. The פילגש however provided a proxy for the Levite; they may not rape him, but through her, they still attack his identity as a man, albeit in a more socially acceptable way (the relative acceptability shown when he tells the assembled tribes, but hides the threat of homosexual rape). By taking the פילגש, they violate his property and show him to be ineffectual and weak as head of his household. He cannot protect his dependents and is

forced to remain inside the house, the traditional domain of women. The exchange is now 'like-for-like': instead of a man being worth two women, one of them a virgin, therefore of extra worth, he is worth the same as his unfaithful פילגש. He had attempted to regain a sense of male identity by throwing her out and reasserting his place in the world of men, but the symbolism of the story says otherwise. In a world of patriarchal values that places high expectations on men to protect their 'weaker' partners, his dignity and self-respect as a man are irrevocably shattered (von Kellenbach, 2000, p. 181) and will be mirrored in the emasculation of the men of Shiloh, equally unable to protect their female relatives in chapter 21.

The profound loss of identity experienced by the Levite helps explain his anger towards the פילגש: anger at the object that dared to challenge his masculinity in the first place and displaced anger against the men of Gibeah. The פילגש and her body are a vivid embodiment of his loss, of sexuality gone awry, and he does everything he can to erase it, physically and verbally. The mutilation of the woman's body is a graphic attempt at suppressing her sexual identity. She no longer is an object of desire, his or anyone else's; he is ultimately master of her body, disposes of her as he likes, and uses her broken body to shore up his crumbling identity. In his speech to the nation, he regains control of the narrative and re-establishes himself as a man in a society that prizes war as an ultimate expression of masculinity.

Judges 21

Whilst Judges 20 ushers in a different crisis of identity (5.1.2.2), Judges 21 picks up the theme of masculinity and its expression in Israel. The oath not to give wives to the Benjaminites was not anodyne. It was a calculated attack on Benjamin as a tribe, either to erase memory of them ('to purge the evil from Israel') provided Israel was victorious, or to erase them from Israel by turning them into a separate nation (had Benjaminite women survived). It was also an attack on the men's masculinity by preventing its normal social expression through bargaining for wives, marriage and reproduction. It was another way of feminising the enemy in war. The crisis is actualised when Israel wants to restore Benjamin, but have cut off Benjamin's lineage, and the possibility of reintroducing them as men of the nation through normal processes of exchange (4.2.2.3). A conflict of identity ensues, between their image of themselves as men of their word who cannot break an oath, and men of Israel who must preserve the integrity of the nation.

The decree against Jabesh-Gilead offers a way to save face whilst further humiliating others not considered 'man enough' to have gone to war. Whilst acquiring wives through military force was an accepted practice (Deut. 21.10-14), it was seen as deeply humiliating for the men of the defeated group (Fenstein, 2014, p. 70). The campaign against the city therefore has a two-fold aim: to restore Israel's sense of wholeness by providing wives for Benjamin and thereby a way back out of defeat into full masculinity; and to humiliate and eradicate the men who had not actualised male warrior identity when they should have. The following episode, Shiloh, further strengthens the point that the search for wives for Benjamin is not solely about procreation. The elders aim to restore every Benjaminite warrior to full participation into the assembly of the *men* of Israel. One could argue that the Israelites may have acted out of guilt and the search for wives was repayment, or that they were concerned about the Benjaminites marrying foreigners, though neither possibility is verbalised, and the people actively transfer blame onto Yahweh for their predicament. The search for wives for Benjamin neatly ties issues of national identity (who is Israel, questions of land and inheritance) and male identity (the male as warrior, the male as potential head of the household).

5.1.2.2. Threat to national identity

Israel and Gibeah

The Levite's response widens his personal crisis of identity to the level of the nation; the cognitive dissonance he felt at being treated as a stranger, an Other, by the men of Gibeah is shared with Israel. The distribution of body parts is the defining, lynchpin moment of the three chapters, when private tragedy is turned into not just a public issue of justice, but a national crisis of identity. The Levite begs the rest of Israel to share into his identity crisis, and seeks to create cognitive dissonance at a national level, asking the tribes to assess what has happened in light of their own cultural and ethnic traditions (though no explicit mention is made of Yahweh or the law). Meanwhile, the dismembered body of the פילגש attains a presence and power she never had in life, and her body parts are still referred to as 'her', so that 'she' is used by the Levite in resolving the crisis he faces. The female body, dead and silent, provides a space for him to inscribe his identity as a wronged party, a man of Israel, 'the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman' (19.4).

Israel's reaction is telling: 'Such a thing has not been seen in Israel since the days the sons of Israel came out of Egypt'. The reference to the Exodus is synonymous with the birth and defining moment of Israel as a nation. Cognitive dissonance has reached the national

level. This isn't just about the Levite and his פילגש being assaulted by thugs, but is something that the people of Gibeah (now blurred together with the 'worthless men') have committed against the very spirit of Israel, something that marks them out as non-Israelite, not-us. Therefore, they must be cast as Others, and treated as Others, otherwise the mirror image that is reflected is one that distorts who Israel thinks it is.

The Levite concludes by appealing to Israel to consider who they are, and how they can respond to such an outrageous act against their national identity (20.6-7). The distinction between 'Israel' and 'they' is clear in 20.6, and reinforced in 20.7 by the direct address 'all of you, sons of Israel', followed by the imperative. Gibeah and Benjamin are effectively 'othered', so that they are no longer part of Israel, and war can be conducted on the basis of their foreign, alien status. The emphasis is on the sin committed against *Israel*, rather than against the פילגש. They have treated kin as one treats an alien and therefore breached ethnic solidarity (Carden, 1999, p. 92). The Levite is not overtly seeking justice or punishment on a personal level, but calling for a moral crusade to restore purity to the nation, and eliminate the enemy within. His call is for Israel to choose who they want to be through their actions, and define who belongs and who does not.

Civil war

The sense of broken national identity is evident as the story unfolds. For the first time in Judges the nation has gathered together, but it is to punish one of their own rather than settle the land (Butler, 2009, p. 440). Yet, despite the repeated mention of 'all Israel', Benjamin is clearly not present, and we find out later that neither was Jabesh-Gilead, which casts doubt on the unity portrayed. They gather at a significant site for national identity, Mizpah, a locus of ritual, legal and political activity in Judges (Niditch, 2008, p. 202). They use ritual language that hints at the covenant (20.10), yet the gathering is only superficially centred on Yahweh; indeed, Yahweh is excluded from the very reference to the birth and foundation of the nation, 'when the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt'. One may wonder, if Yahweh and the covenant are no longer the uniting centre of the nation, what is? The absence of Yahweh will be further underlined by the half-hearted appeals to Yahweh when defeat bites (4.4.2.3). The seeds of uncertainty however were sown by the narrator with the discrepancy between 20.1, the assembly before Yahweh, and 20.2, which had the 'people of God' rather than the expected, the people of Yahweh.

Initially there seems to be a resolve to punish Gibeah only (20.10), supported by an attempt to invite Benjamin to participate in the punitive expedition; for a brief moment,

the status of Benjamin hangs in the balance. This 'evil' (רעה) has been committed 'among you' (Benjamin): Benjamin is given an opportunity to distance itself from the crime. The same phrase is repeated with a variant, 'to purge this evil from the midst of Israel'. But Benjamin decides that tribal solidarity trumps national solidarity, and they become 'the Benjaminites', with no further mention of the men of Gibeah as distinct from Benjamin as a whole. The nation that has forgotten its God and covenant now descends into civil war. Israel is said three times to act 'as one man' despite its brokenness; ironic, given the expression only occurs nine times in the entire Old Testament (Amit, 1999, p. 299). The civil war proceeds to its conclusion, an eradication of this Other-of-the-Same that cannot be allowed to exist unless it obediently reflects the identity prescribed by the whole.

Israel cannot bear to look into the eyes of 'Benjamin their brother' and see a reflection of who they are, yet their behaviour towards Benjamin shows the same lack of brotherly solidarity that was shown to the Levite, and their treatment of women closely replicates the fate of the פילגש. Their horror at this mirror image replicates the Levite's horror at seeing himself through the eyes of the פילגש, and explains the virulence of their response. They cannot bear this reflection, react disproportionately and decree חרם unilaterally on Benjamin, without consultation with Yahweh, even though it is normally only used in war against foreign enemies (Wong, 2006, p. 36). In times of peace, as a tool of government of the nation, it is only prescribed in cases of idolatry, that is, in cases where one sub-group actively departs from the core identity of the nation. Even then, it is a blunt tool that fosters ambiguity and uncertainty about identity and belonging within the nation as a whole (Niditch, 1993, p. 69).

Civil war, an attack by the nation on the self, has different outcomes to war against external enemies. Rather than strengthening in-group solidarity and stabilising identity (Niditch, 1993, p. 21), it leads to further disruption and uncertainty, whilst the normal processes associated with the transition from conflict to peace (ritualised celebrations, exchange of women) are jeopardised. Niditch's comprehensive study of war in the Old Testament (1993) shows the discomfort of Hebrew writers with some of the ethics of war, and, in particular, with internecine wars that are more psychologically costly, as it is even more difficult to kill a friend than an enemy, and the rationalisations and justifications needed are more elaborate (p. 21). This is the process at work in chapter 21: the unravelling of Israelite identity by the specific dilemmas triggered by *civil* war. Despite their fight against 'this evil thing, not seen in Israel', the eleven tribes now clearly still

experience cognitive dissonance. Somehow, the reality of Israel minus Benjamin is not a shift of identity that is either comfortable or acceptable. Reintegrating Benjamin therefore becomes the goal, in order to reach back to an ideal unity as a basis for communal identity.

The tribes reject the option of forming a new identity without Benjamin. They do not consider the possibility of forming a new identity based on dialogue and learning from the past. Instead, they consider ways to return to a pre-war state, having Benjamin back without questioning their own motivations and responsibility in the quasi-extinction of a tribe (as we see with them all returning to their own places, as if nothing had happened). Instead, they blame Yahweh, the ultimate guarantor of identity, for 'making a breach' in Israel.

5.1.2.3. Perceived resolution

Ironically, the solution to the new crisis of identity is a repetition of the Benjaminite problem, an ironic vicious cycle that hints that the perceived 'solutions' will only lead to further fragmentation. In a search for acceptable doorways out of war, the men of Israel look for the women they use as money of exchange, and plan the destruction of another 'enemy within'. Devoting Jabesh-Gilead to the ban is an extreme response; exterminating Benjamin was a response to the fact that Benjaminite actions (and politics between the tribes) had threatened the social and ethical identity of Israel. Exterminating Jabesh-Gilead is also a response to a threat to identity, however this time, the main threat isn't that presented by the target of the attack, but by Benjaminite extinction. The fact that Jabesh-Gilead had not joined in the war is never presented as a threat; it is merely a justification for solving the wider problem without challenging their own sense of identity by re-considering the oath they had taken. The narrator tells an ironic tale that questions where Israelite identity lies: clearly not in tribal solidarity; not in keeping vows, since they are easily circumvented; not in upholding certain standards of purity, since the Gibeah culprits (and the Levite) are never specifically punished; not in the covenant, since they have not followed the principles set out in Deuteronomy (4.2.1.2); and not in Yahweh, blamed and no longer an active partner.

The Israelites find that identity is more complex than they had thought, and cannot be simply chosen or defined at will; choosing to cut off Benjamin seemed easy, yet provoked a deeper crisis. Regardless of Benjamin's actions, they are still 'our brothers' in 21.6. The identity of Israel is constituted relationally, and therefore cannot be changed unilaterally, though the people ignore the fact and reproduce the pattern with Jabesh-Gilead. The

repetition of the 'solution' suggests a gradual collapse of the notion of ethnicity and ethnic boundaries in the conscious mind of the Israelites, as it becomes difficult to distinguish between Israelite and non-Israelite, a distinction further blurred with mention of Shiloh (21.12), located 'in the land of Canaan'. Israel had a 'camp' there; it is deeply ironic that the locus of the 'solution' to restoring Israelite identity should be 'in the land of Canaan'. Shiloh forms the backdrop to the next episode, and the location introduces a doubt as to the ethnicity of the abducted girls; the 'festival of Yahweh' in Shiloh may be the source of the women's dancing, but the link is not unequivocal.

Here in Shiloh the Benjaminites themselves are doing the abducting, in a mock-military fashion possibly intended to restore their status as men-warriors, which simply highlights the disproportion and irony of the episode. Benjamin is now properly back in the fold, included in the plotting and bargaining of the men of Israel, albeit as a more passive partner. There is an echo of the men's bargaining over women in order to spare masculine identity in the house in Gibeah. The surface plot shows a reunited Israel where men bond together as brothers by exchanging women, laying ambushes and claiming rewards. At a deeper level, Benjamin is ordered about by the elders, not a fully reintegrated tribe. The men's bargaining is not to achieve lasting peace but to ensure the proper functioning of masculinity, war techniques are used against dancing maidens, and Israel does its best to ignore the fracture that lies at its core, but will bloom as the book of Samuel develops. Meanwhile, the 'disgraceful thing' that had led the people to war in the first place is reproduced six-hundred-fold on the abducted women; it is now the whole of Israel that agrees on doing what does 'not happen in Israel', in a complete undermining of the national identity it went to war to defend. 21.24 then concludes with the picture of all returning to their own tribes and inheritance, in an echo of the woman's body sent out to every tribe in Israel: Israel, the body politic, is dismembered and disfigured just as the body of the פילגש was. 21.24 is the conclusion to the story when seen literally through the eyes of Israel: a return home, to antebellum peace; it is the conclusion when read ironically with the story of the פילגש, and in conjunction with the refrain in 21.25: a world broken down into its smallest constituent pieces, individuals, with no real sense of communal identity, morals or justice.

5.1.3. The place of God

The place of God in the process of identity formation now needs considering, as a profoundly Irigarayan concern (Irigaray, 1980; 1984; 1987a; 1996; 2013) and as key to a

theological understanding of Israel. The great renewal of the covenant of the end of Joshua set up Israel as the people of Yahweh, gathered by Yahweh, brought to freedom by Yahweh, and united in their allegiance to the practice of the covenant. Judges is much more ambivalent about Israel's relationship to Yahweh, with a mixed picture of Yahwist religious practices alongside Canaanite religious structures and usage (Boling, 1975, p. 18). Whilst the overall framework of the book portrays Yahweh as deeply caring about his people and responding to their cries of pain, individual stories and character show little interest in cultic and ethical reform and increasingly slip away from covenantal living.

5.1.3.1. Relating to Yahweh

By the end of Judges, the very people supposed to lead Israel's spiritual life are thoroughly discredited, and cultic sites are used to plot internecine warfare and seek to manipulate Yahweh like a local tribal god. Intertextual references, particularly to 1 Samuel 11, strengthen the picture of the gathering of the people at Mizpah as a parody of the way Israel functions when under Yahweh's rule (4.3.3.3). The parallel with Judges 1.1 highlights how Israel no longer behaves as the people of Yahweh in 20.8-9, since they make up their mind independently, are not empowered or mandated by Yahweh, decide tactics themselves and fail to address Yahweh by his covenant name (Block, 1999, p. 555). The weeping before Yahweh of chapters 20 and 21 has no spiritual focus, simply wounded pride, humiliation, and grief (Block, 1999, p. 580). The final episode, the attack on Shiloh at precisely the time of a festival to Yahweh, marks rock-bottom in Israel's disregard of the covenant. The picture of 19-21 is that of a non-relationship between Israel and Yahweh, with little interaction and gradual withdrawal by both partners, whilst uncertainty about the nature of Israel's faith is marked by inconsistency in using the divine name, a refusal to acknowledge his foundational role in the defining moment of the nation and using him to deflect blame when convenient. There is little to suggest that Yahweh and the covenant are central components in the constitution of collective Israelite identity at this stage.

5.1.3.2. God as mirror

Conscious religious practice is only one aspect of the place of the divine in identity formation. Irigaray draws on Feurbach to explore how talk of God serves as ultimate guarantor of discourse, reality and human identity (1.3.2.1). She argues that as human beings see themselves reflected in the divine, their 'horizon of becoming' is not reduced to their immediate space and time. Irigaray herself spends little if no time considering God as *Other*, but simply explores how men and women may relate to the divine in ways that

enhances and/or distorts identity. Her thought can help us analyse distortions of the divine/human relationship, but we need to go beyond her own reflections on God to analyse Israel's relationship with Yahweh as Other with his own subjectivity and presence in the text.

At a positive level, Irigaray sees the function of God as a mirror of potential becoming, essential to identity, as it builds a bridge between past and future and ensures passage from the particular and instantiated into a transcendent horizon (1987a, p. 79). This is particularly relevant to gender, to facilitate passage from isolated man or woman to *genre*, and set this genre into a horizon of becoming rather than leave it into a fixed instantiation in time and space (2.1.2). Irigaray's most stringent critique however highlights how the projection of identity onto God often leads the human subject to claim universality. Projecting human ideals and concepts onto God is often used to legitimise whatever the person doing the projecting is seeking to achieve, and reinforces their ability to legislate for what is outside their normal sphere of control or influence by appealing to an ultimate Other who guarantees truth and order (Irigaray, 1974, p. 263). The projection is then used to oppress and exclude. An issue in applying this is the discrepancy between the god built through projection and Yahweh as independent subject, alluded to in the text through the differential use of God *vs* Yahweh.

Recounting Israel's *use* of God shows that God is used perfunctorily, as guarantor of Israel's tribal integrity, made in the image of the warrior male, a god who will not contest their decision to solve problems through force, expected to bless and legitimise their plans. When blessing fails to materialise, the people blame God for failing to preserve the integrity of the nation. The repeated rituals of chapter 20 and 21 do not seek a dialogue with an Other who may have different views or offer counsel, but rather work as a way to reinforce national identity and cohesion by bringing the men together before a single focus meant to encourage, galvanise and give confidence before battle. In 20.1, they assemble 'before Yahweh', yet do not involve Yahweh in discussion; when they finally speak to Yahweh, it is not to listen but to ensure victory through divinely-ordered tactics (20.18). It is also a search for the shape of their national identity: is Judah still their leader, as in 1.1? The divine answer is ambiguous: it could be a re-affirmation of existing identity, or a reminder of where their focus should lie (the פילגש from Bethlehem in Judah). When they are defeated, their identity as a nation is rocked, as the God supposed to give them victory has not delivered. Yet the people do not question their initial judgement, which

would have yielded dialogue and possibly repentance, but rather how to proceed from there on. Further encounters show that ritual and sacrifices largely take the place of dialogue with God; they are not expecting to meet Yahweh as subject, but see him as the totalitarian subject that can dictate the fortunes of the nation, much as the elders do in chapter 21. In an overall culture where men can assemble and decide on how to mete out punishment on those who fail to meet their standards, where the head of the household can dispose of his פילגש summarily, God is imagined in like fashion: capricious and unpredictable, making decisions without consultation.

The narrator however, through the distinction between divine descriptors, irony, and the portrayal of a God who gradually withdraws as his subjectivity is suppressed by the people, enables readers to ask who it is Israel is praying and offering sacrifices to. A gap is opened between god as represented by the people of Israel through their speech and prayers, and God as the ultimate Other.

In addition, women are cut off from the god of the men of Israel. Women are not involved in religious ritual, do not pray, and are not visited by angels. And when women dance at a festival of Yahweh, they are brutally interrupted. This is not the picture in the rest of Judges, but a symptom of the spiritual dereliction of the nation. Divine absence is most salient at the point where women are victims, and not rescued as they are in Genesis (4.3.3). The lack of access to God is another symptom of a phallocentric discourse that concentrates all meaning into one totalitarian principle, cutting women off from the possibility of a transcendent Other; as such, they are prevented from developing genre identity and fragmented into an inchoate individuality whose shape is dictated by the men's need for appropriate mirrors. The god of Israel as seen by the people shows no interest in women, and women have no access to transcendence since the transcendent Other of Israel is made firmly in men's image.

5.1.3.3. God as Other

The God portrayed by the narrator, in contrast, resists rubber-stamping Israel's demands, resists being used, and does not impose justice from above in totalitarian fashion (4.3.2.8). The silence of God becomes both an act of protest and self-limitation to make space for the otherness of his human creatures, however destructive this otherness might be. God in the text is treated by the men of Israel in much the same way as women: done to, used, ignored, silenced. The narrative position that Yahweh occupies mirrors, not that of the men, but of the women of the text, in a complete reversal of expectations and

powerful commentary on the destructiveness of the nation's behaviour. As a sacred text therefore, Judges offers a bridge between past and present that remembers the dis(re)membered, both women and traumatised nation, rather than simply echoing the cries of the victors.

This gap between the god of the characters and the god presented by the narrator is crucial in understanding Judges as sacred text. If the two were identical, then the text would implicitly approve and theologise the gender and ethnic differences that lead to Israel's self-representation; identification between the two would legitimise Israel's treatment of Benjamin and of women. In addition, it would theologise the portrait of God as Israelite male warrior, using power unilaterally, a tribal god siding with one nation regardless of its actions, ethics and behaviour. Instead, the narrator challenges narratives of power, both divine and human, and how power should be used.

5.1.4. Otherness and identity

5.1.4.1. The 'Other of the Same'

The representation of otherness forms a core strand of the constitution of identity. The construction of otherness by characters in Judges 19-21 is consistent, regarding both gender and ethnic identity. Woman is the non-man, the non-warrior, the passive and inchoate Other who serves as mirror for a totalitarian construction of gender identity. The Jebusites are initially the ethnic Other, soon replaced by Benjamin, now the non-Israelites, who seek unnatural sexual practices, who protect the guilty, who do not care about justice, who eventually are cast into the passive role of emasculated enemies unable to reproduce. Benjamin is the mirror that Israel uses to achieve a mirage of ethnic identity and unity. When this breaks down, the men revert to the trusted mirror with which the story started: woman. The reintegration of Benjamin is achieved through the othering and victimisation of the women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh, and the violent negation of the transgressive pattern set by the פילגש. The construction of otherness by the narrator however forms an ironic counterpoint to the characters: it is Israel that is constructed as Other; to Yahweh and the covenant, to the nations that surround them, to the successful warriors they wish to be, to one another in ways that alienate, cut off, and dismember the nation.

In Irigarayan parlance however, these Others are not real Others but projections designed to reinforce the identity of the One, 'Others-of-the-Same' (1.2.1.1). This is not to say that there should be no mirrors in identity formation; relational identity includes the need for

the gaze of the Other, reflected in the I-You encounter. But this mirror should facilitate joint identity formation by enabling the recognition of finiteness; only then can a true Other be allowed to emerge, in the spaces of self-withdrawal, of limitation that create both room for difference and room in-between, for the two to meet and construct an identity that is not collapsed into the One and the not-One (1.2.1). In Judges, the only self-withdrawal at work is that of Yahweh, which does not lead to encounter, but to Israel filling the space and co-opting Yahweh into its own project of identity formation. The only spaces left for otherness to emerge are those that exceed the discourse of the nation, liminal and ambiguous spaces that escape or exceed representation: the פילגש, neither slave nor wife, whose odd actions place her outside traditional representations of feminine identity, a woman neither in nor out of the house-of-the-father but over a stranger's threshold, both young girl and woman, betrayer and innocent victim, a woman who transgresses boundaries even in death as her body is not allowed proper burial rights; a Levite who breaks the Levitical codes; characters not dwelling where they should dwell; Israelites who behave like Jebusites; Israel living in Canaan, not yet masters of their own land; women who dance on the edge of a city; a woman whose absence defines the whole of the last two chapters despite never being mentioned again. The process of specularisation, of defining the self through the Other, breaks down repeatedly in Judges 19-21, and resists the attempts of characters to reinstate it.

The entire tale showcases a country in transition, trying to tame their environment through predictable binary oppositions, and failing to do so as their own otherness and that of those around resists definition. Stable binary pairs are consistently destabilised in Judges 19, opening up endless ambiguities (Leftkovitz, 2010, p. 139): home/away, safety/danger, night/day, inside/outside, stranger/kin, licit relations/illicit sex, hospitality/inhospitality, wife/prostitute, masculine/feminine, fair trade/theft, lawful punishment/excessive brutality, life/death… The pattern is carried into 20-21 as the men of Israel try to regain control, yet create more instability: Israel/Benjamin, Israel/non-Israel, Israel/Canaan, defeat/victory, man/woman, god/Yahweh, justice/injustice, celebration/mourning, peace/war. The binary process, typical of phallocentric discourse (1.2.1) breaks down completely, leaving the people of Israel with the illusion of national and gender identity, peace and safety. Without access to stable collective meanings and representations, the people are left to scatter, each to their own inheritance, each doing what is right in their own eyes.

5.1.4.2. Otherness and victimisation

Analysis of the use of the Other in identity construction in Judges 19-21 shows a consistent pattern of violence and victimisation. When the Other is defined forcibly by the One, the violence done to their identity is replicated in social and physical violence, with the worst violence against those who focus multiple types of otherness, such as gender and ethnic otherness (Cheng, 2002): the פילגש, as a woman, as פילגש and as a traveller and sojourner; the women of Jabesh-Gilead, as women, and as members of a city that refused to join the confederation of tribes, thereby foregoing Israelite status; the women of Shiloh, as women, from a city 'in the land of Canaan'. The women are most victimised because they lack the ability to enter the systems of exchange that could provide redress. When the Levite is threatened with victimisation for being a stranger, he can use women as a shield because their multiple othernesses makes them more vulnerable. In response to Benjamin, Israel affirm their own identity by multiplying the otherness of the Benjaminites: they are cast as non-Israelites, ethnic Others, and deprived of the means of marrying and ensuring an inheritance through children (as the means to possess land), in an act of symbolic castration, turning them into feminised Others.

The very 'othering' of Benjamin, and, later, Jabesh-Gilead, makes it possible to mete out the punishment Israel plans. When they are called 'brother' or 'kin', Israel wavers in its resolve (20.21; 20.28; 21.6). Killing another in war is never as easy as it seems, and war on kin rather than stranger places an increased psychological burden on warriors and needs more intense and elaborate justifications (Niditch, 1993, p. 21). The process of justification here is a process of othering that places Benjamin under the judgement normally visited on idolatrous people. Judges 19-21 is therefore a perceptive psychological tale that exposes the processes through which one group justifies the victimisation of another through the differential construction of their identity. The fact that these processes are laid bare in a sacred text whose narrator is far from approving is highly significant: it bears witness to the victims and opens up a space for reflection and potential change for those whose sacred text it is.

5.2. Women as the victimised Other

5.2.1. Women, inversion and invisibility

The portrayal of women in Judges 19-21 has so far conformed to Irigaray's description of the phallocentric discourse as erasing sexual difference by preventing true difference from emerging. This discourse is built on the use of women as raw material for the construction of a (male) totalitarian subject, and explains the ubiquitous representation of male activity

and the public domain within 'official history' (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 65). The possibility of female subjectivity, and male subjectivity that is different *with*, rather than different *from* - is suppressed, yet not fully erased. Irigaray's prescription for working with such culture is to speak from within the abyss, within the place of forgetting and erasing, by setting oneself in the place of the Other who is being erased (*mimesis*). Her approach has informed my analysis of the text so far, as I have consciously examined the representation of gender difference and identity; whilst my conclusions are rooted in narrative analysis, and within the boundaries created by the narrator, they nonetheless consciously work on unearthing the hidden, half-said, and suggested within the text. Using story as a medium is particularly effective, as it allows the narrator to make spaces for these gaps, to expose the faultline rather than 'shouting over the abyss' about the presence of the abyss (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 65). The discomfort of the story, its invitation to readers to go back and reconsider meaning, to examine assumptions, does not betray indifference to women but rather concern for issues of gender and the treatment of women as a major theological problem for the book of Judges. I now want to explore women's experience in 19-21, as it were, 'from the abyss', considering how women's identity is shaped, portrayed and brutalised.

5.2.2. Bodies and sexuality

5.2.2.1. Bodies and identity

The body of the פילגש, fought over by the men of Israel, lies at the centre of the episode. It is unsurprising for the female body to be the locus of struggle and multiple meanings. Women, according to Irigaray, have long been reduced to bodiliness through their association with sexuality and reproduction, and confinement to the domestic realm, a confinement that hides the bodily reality of gender interdependence from the public realm (1.2.3.2). The symbolisation and representation of the body is therefore crucial in elaborating a single, totalitarian public identity. The male body is the locus of symbolised Jewish identity and belonging through circumcision, a fact that marks out the male subject as a public, political person through a private act. The male body in itself carries this connection between public and private, between individual and community, a connection denied women. Bodily difference enhances otherness, whether a different male body (such as that of the 700 *left-handed* Benjaminites in 20.16), or a female body, different from the human 'norm'. Berquist (2000) points out that female bodies were perceived as dangerous by being 'porous': in a society based on the household, women's bodies held the threat of penetration by another household (p. 80). Therefore, whilst sexuality binds

the household together by ensuring progeny and genealogy, it can also be used in household 'wars', hence the strict codes regulating female bodies and their involvement in sexual activity (*ibid*.). As male bodies are not considered 'porous', they do not present a threat to the household in the same way. This dynamic is at work in 19-21, as the body of the פילגש is appropriated by the men of Gibeah. The threat of rape against the Levite was not just a physical threat, but one against the integrity of his household, and against the right categorisation of bodily functions and the threats and privileges accorded to them.

5.2.2.2. Virginity

The first locus of battle over women's bodies is the meaning of virginity as defined within a male society. The meaning is not universal; indeed, the story of Jephthah's daughter mourning her virginity (with no mention of the possibility of children) suggests that female sexuality was not always taboo. However, in 19-21, the control of women's bodies is enforced radically. The theme works itself out in the story of the women of Jabesh-Gilead, divided by their sexual status. Sexuality and murder are consistently linked to gender violence in Judges: Jephthah's daughter, Samson's wife, the פילגש (Bal, 1988a, p. 28). The language concerning the girls of Jabesh-Gilead is unusually emphatic about their sexual status: 'all the women who have ever known a male by sleeping with him, you will devote to the ban' (21.11), followed by 'out of the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, they found 400 girls, virgins, who had never known a man, never slept with a male' (21.12). Not only are they looking for virgins, women of bodily integrity, but they actively put to death women who have been sexually active, women who have 'known' a man, rather than simply 'been known' by a man. This is a very rare instance of women being the subject of sexual activity and men the object; women are not allowed, in this story, to be active in their sexuality, even within legal relationships. One wonders how they ascertained virginity, and what happened to virgins too old or too young to bear children. Presumably, only women of childbearing age were chosen, so that virginity was allied with potential fertility as a necessary bodily characteristic for salvation. As a result, all the women mentioned in the text who have been sexually active are murdered in 19-21, whilst the only women mentioned in the text who are still alive by the end of 21, are those who have not 'known a man'. The overall effect suggests fear of female sexuality and punishment for exercising it, even within the parameters prescribed by social norms. The value and meaning of virginity is firmly upheld as defined, controlled and rewarded by the men of the text. Women cannot create a positive meaning for their own bodily status; instead, its only meaning and value are dictated by exchanges between men.

5.2.2.3. Sexuality

The portrayal of sexuality and its excesses in 19-21 needs exploring in detail so we do not simply invest it with contemporary meanings for sexual acts, such as gratification of desire and reproduction (Lipka, 2006, p. 6). Frymer-Kensky (1989, p. 90) argues that sexuality in Ancient Israel was symbolised radically differently from surrounding cultures; God is not represented as guarantor of fertility or potency, and sexuality is desacralized. Instead, talk of sexuality is largely relegated to the legal domain, as a 'question of societal regulation' (p. 90). Initially, portrayal of sexuality in the law is positive, as wise men are encouraged to enjoy their marital status, since sexuality 'bonds the married pair together and creates the family' (p. 93). The bond is then symbolised as one body, hence 'actions that break them apart are wrong, since the body should be kept whole' (Berquist, 2002, p.59). This is not a mutual joining however, but an encompassing of the female body by the male, so that her body does not have a legal existence of its own but is seen as an extension of the male body (*ibid*.).

In these gendered concepts of the sexual body, the male determines the meaning and extent of his sexuality, while women do not have access to modes of representation and expression of their own. Aschkenasy (1986) argues that this is where patriarchal oppression in the Hebrew Scriptures is at its clearest. Whilst sexual bonding through family structures gives women a home, shelter and protection, the system is designed to protect primarily male interests. Women's bodies are seen as dangerous for the feelings and desire they arouse, which may cause other men to breach the boundaries between households, and women are held responsible for both their 'own excesses and those [they] may have aroused in the male' (p. 109). Sexual transgression thereby focuses on the damage to the male whose responsibility the woman is, without focus on the impact of the experience on the woman herself, a tendency replicated in narrative texts on the matters of the heart, which usually only report the men's feelings (p. 122). Men's control over women's sexuality and bodies is demonstrated amply in Judges 19 and 21, as men bargain over women's bodies and sexuality, with no acknowledgement of the women's subjectivity. However, Aschkenasy's point needs tempering; whilst legal texts seem largely unfair to women and privilege the men, male sexuality was also boundaried by law, with its proper expression restricted to the household within which children are born. Both men and women can sin sexually. Sexual transgression is repeatedly portrayed as a national issue that pollutes the land in Leviticus, and these concerns are reflected in the

reaction of Israel in Judges 20, as Israel responds to a crisis that they think puts their very survival in the land at risk. What is unclear is what exactly they think the crisis is.

Sexual transgression, an evil that threatens the land, is set as a theme in the opening verses of chapter 19, with זנה. What the woman has done constitutes a sexual transgression on its own according to the verb. Reading canonically (leaving aside questions of relative dating), the fact that she is 'married' to a Levite creates a second level of sexual transgression, since Levites are forbidden to marry women who are prostitutes or have been defiled (Leviticus 21.7): אִשָּׁה זָנָה וַחֲלָלָה לֹא יִקָּחוּ. The pointing of the verse shows that זנה here is likely to refer to a prostitute, though the echo is still strong. The second proscription can also apply to the פילגש following the events in Gibeah: she is doubly forbidden to the Levite, though whether the law applies to פילגש as well as wives is unclear. The law concerning Levites raises immediate questions about his character: whilst the initial action may be her responsibility, the question is open as to whether he will take responsibility for his own sexuality. By 'pimping' the פילגש to the crowd, and allowing her to be 'defiled' by others, he effectively transgresses against his own identity as a Levite.

Most characters in 19 transgress some form of sexual boundary: the father shows himself complicit with his daughter's adultery (if she has been unfaithful) by not following Deut. 22; the Levite and פילגש we have already seen; the old man participates in the defilement of the פילגש by offering her to the crowd, whilst the men of Gibeah appropriate another man's partner (whether the laws of adultery apply to a פילגש is unclear). The circle of responsibility and participation in the transgression widens as Benjamin side with the culprits, and the whole of Israel condones the misuse of חרם and laws concerning captive brides to find brides for Benjamin (who will then be doubly guilty). The entire nation is portrayed as one where sexuality has gone awry and the very fabric of society, the household, is threatened.

I want here to make a note about homosexuality and the threatened rape of the Levite. The parallel episode in Genesis has led to Sodom becoming a by-word for homosexual practice; why that episode, rather than Judges 19, should have caught collective imagination is unclear. What is clear, however, is that such interpretations are a

misreading of the episodes. There is no suggestion in the text itself (either Genesis or Judges) that this is about male desire for another man; rather, just as any other rape, it is about power and identity (Mullner, 1999). If it had been about homosexuality and male desire, then why would the men accept the פילגש as substitute? Why not throw out the boy servant instead? The very offer (and acceptance) of a female substitute suggests that the dynamics of the episode are rooted elsewhere: sexuality is an instrument rather than a goal. The homosexual nature of the rape is relevant in terms of transgression of sexual boundaries, as a specific sexual transgression identified in Leviticus 18.22 and 20.13, specifically applied to males[99] but it does not explain motivation or interpersonal dynamics.

Both threatened and actual rape highlight the violent nature of sexuality in 19-21, a theme further reinforced by the war scenes of Jabesh-Gilead and mock-war scenes at Shiloh, and graphically enacted in the dismemberment. Sexuality is about appropriation of the Other by the One, whoever this Other may be. When the Levite is Other in Gibeah, the men attempt to 'know' him, to possess him. As the פילגש is doubly othered, she is known by the men, and thrown even further into otherness, so that the Levite dismembers her dead body (dead, therefore impure, therefore quintessentially Other) and sends it out to Israel just as he had sent her out to the men of Gibeah. The dismemberment is intensely violent, intimate and sexualised. As the people of Jabesh-Gilead are declared traitors and put to the ban, their women's sexuality is pored over and either appropriated or erased; and the women of Shiloh are watched from a hidden place, appropriated visually before being seized physically. Sexuality and power over the Other are inseparable here.

5.3. Violence, force and rape

The association of sexuality and violence is a perennial theme in both ancient and classical writings (Irigaray, 1974, p. 3ff); the ubiquity of this association needs considering, particularly in relation to sacred texts, because of the way they are used in reinforcing social norms. To come back to Irigaray's thoughts on the human person's relationship to God as one of projection that validates existing thoughts and patterns of behaviour, the pattern can be applied to sacred texts as the intermediary for God. Interpretation is therefore crucial for establishing the boundaries within which the text can be read, defined by the text (2.2.7; 2.3.1.2) and interacting with the readers' own in a third space

[99] I recognise these verses are highly contested and subject to ongoing research and interpretation, however these debates are beyond the scope of this study.

of interpretation (2.2.5). If readers' subjectivity is forgotten, they are collapsed into the otherness of the text, which then ceases to function as a sacred text bridging past and present; if readers define interpretation but forget the text's own boundaries and world, then the otherness of the text is collapsed into theirs in an act of totalitarian appropriation, which also prevents the text from functioning as a sacred text. Reading Judges 19-21 as a story that legitimises and fails to condemn sexual violence, as has been the case (4.1.3), and elevating this to the level of sacred text, is catastrophic for both women and men (Kirk-Duggan, 2013, p. 84; Washington, 1997). Reading it as a story that begs the readers to reflect on abusive behaviour and the degeneration of a society creates a very different encounter between text and reader.

5.3.1. Violence

5.3.1.1. Defining violence

Defining violence with respect to Biblical texts is not straightforward, given the lack of an equivalent conceptual word. Reeder (2012, p. 1ff) argues that in Scripture, legitimate or legal violence is not strictly speaking considered violence; violence is the purview of the unrighteous, usually associated with oppression, injustice and wickedness. Hence Hebrew words for violence do not cover actions prescribed by law in dealing with sinful behaviour. The words that most closely match our current understanding of violence as 'action taken against a person to cause their injury or death' (Reeder, 2012, p. 5) include חמס (Gen. 6.11; Judges 9.24; Ps. 7.17; Prov. 4.16; Isa.53.9), פריץ (Ps 17.4; Ez 18.10) and שד (Prov 21.7; Isa 16.4; Ezek 45.9), none of which cover legally sanctioned violence. The distinction is relevant to Judges 19-21 as a text that opens up questions about the legality of the nation's actions in response to illegal violence in Gibeah. Judges as a whole largely shows violence as part of a struggle between a smaller, oppressed nation against a stronger enemy (Webb, 2012, p. 58), yet at the same time exposes acts of particular barbarity by Israel, both against enemies (Adoni-Bezek's mutilation, the disembowelling of Eglon, the killing of Sisera) and against Israel's own people (the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, the rape and murder of the פילגש, Jabesh-Gilead). As the book progresses, violence is turned inwards, though in continuity with the earlier story. As readers are gradually brought to consider the story with horror, its coherence as a story also opens up a space for questioning violence as a whole, and the links between legitimised violence and other forms of violence. The carefully constructed narrative arc therefore suggests that Judges does not simply portray violence, but 'interpreted violence' (Webb, 2012, p. 58).

Bearing these caveats in mind, I will use a definition of violence drawn from van Dyck (2003): violence is 'hurting others or forcing them to do something they do not want to do' (p. 96); it can be physical or psychological, and can involve force or coercion. When violence becomes an integral part of a society or organisation it is then termed structural or institutional violence. I have chosen this working definition for its breadth, its recognition that violence is not simply physical, and because it encompasses more than the actions of the individual. It therefore fits Judges 19-21, where the progress from individuals attacking one woman in Gibeah to the people/elders sanctioning the peace time abduction and forced marriage of hundreds of women charts the gradual institutionalisation of violence against women, from the private realm to the public, structural realm.

5.3.1.2. The impact of violence on personhood

It is important to note the devastating impact of violence on personhood. Scarry (1985) reflects on sustained personal violence – the kind of violence the פילגש experiences 'all night' – as utterly shattering the sense of self by completely cutting off the self from the possibility of contact with the Other:

> It brings with it all the solitude of absolute privacy with none of its safety, all the self-exposure of its utterly public nature with none of its possibility for camaraderie or shared experience. (p. 201)

In the abuse the פילגש suffers, she is totally disempowered in a way that takes away speech and physical contact as the normal vehicles for intersubjectivity. Scarry perceptively states that the body as the site of pain is the exact opposite of the voice as site of power (1985, p. 27); the voice of the פילגש, her capacity to relate verbally and articulate pain, are taken away by the experience of torture over an entire night. Nameless and voiceless, the פילגש is ultimately reduced to nothing but a mutilated, fragmented body that can tell no other story than one of pain and trauma. The woman's experience is extreme, and matches Scarry's analysis of extreme violence; yet the process works equally to silence those undergoing (apparently) lesser forms of violence. The Benjaminites are silenced and reduced to their physical need for reproduction; the women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh too.

Violence shatters the self not just of the victim, but of its perpetrators too, as the narrative of Judges 19-21 powerfully exemplifies. Irigaray consistently emphasises that

patriarchy/phallocentrism impacts *both* women and men. Whilst on the surface, the men of the text are the victors and perpetrators, they are also at risk of victimisation, and prisoners to a logic that leads Israel to self-destruct. Von Kellenbach's powerful article (2000) on the effect of impossible choices on Holocaust survivors uses the character of the Levite to illustrate how making choices that result in the victimisation of others creates a psychological process of increasing guilt and an inability to hold together concern for the self and concern for the Other, resulting in emotional distancing and detachment, making intersubjectivity impossible. The men of Israel's confident response to Benjamin crumbles when they face the reality of the aftermath; violence that seemed right and logical has created a deep crack within their corporate identity, a crack they can only think of solving through further internecine violence.

5.3.1.3. Posthumous violence

The disproportion and extreme nature of violence in 19-21 is embodied in the dismemberment of the פילגש. The Old Testament refers consistently to the proper treatment of bodies following death and the expectations of kin in protecting the integrity of the corpse (Olyan, 2013, p. 257). The desecration of a corpse, particularly through consumption by birds and wild animals, was a paradigmatic covenant curse, a ritual act of inversion of expectations (*ibid*.). The Levite's actions echo ritual practices in ancient societies; Webb (2012) quotes the royal archives of Mari and a writer wanting to incite a call to arms by 'taking a prisoner, dismembering him and transporting it to villages far and wide to prompt people to fear and gather in accordance to command' (p. 474). The parallel may suggest how far Israel has adopted the practices of surrounding nations. Olyan (2015, p. 125) argues that acts of corpse abuse are never incidental or impulsive but always planned and strategic. In Scripture itself however, the act stands out as unique in its symbolism and application. The intertext with 1 Samuel 11 shows that it is written as a macabre parody of Saul's rightful call to arms led by 'the Spirit of Yahweh' (4.3.3.3). That the act is directed to the body of the פילגש suggests that she is the bearer of the covenant curse, yet parallels to other corpse desecration stories (Saul's body, Jezebel's) illustrate the disproportion of the Levite's actions and its misdirectedness (there is no explicit link between her breaking of the covenant and the desecration of her corpse). Furthermore, the fact that the Levite may have murdered the פילגש *in order to* use her body parts makes this story a very different one from that of a corpse *allowed* to be desecrated as a

symbol, or to that of an animal sacrifice. The Levite's actions read as an intensely personal attack on the פילגש, denying her personhood even beyond death.

5.3.1.4. Moving from personal to structural violence

The parallel structure of 19 and 21 suggests a parallel between the private violence inflicted on the פילגש and the public violence exerted by the men of Israel against the women of Israel. What was particular is now general, and what was deemed abnormal and 'disgraceful' is shown to be rooted in attitudes and behaviour shared by the nation as a whole (4.1.2). The parallel shows that violence against women is endemic, socially acceptable, and a focused category of violence, distinguishable from more widely spread violence. This however is not quite enough to demonstrate structural or institutional violence. It simply shows how individual oppressive attitudes are replicated in all the men of Israel, rather than belonging to the few. It is the intervention of the elders that moves the story into the realm of institutional violence, by shifting from a sense of 'mob rule' to a considered response by leaders, with justifications and a plan for a structural and legal answer to objections to their actions. The seeds and practice of oppression may have been there already of course – as we can see from study of legal texts – but this passage chronicles a specific moment in the public process of legitimisation.

5.3.2. Sexual and gender violence

5.3.2.1. Defining rape

From structural violence against women, we now move to a more in-depth consideration of gender violence, as expressed in particular through rape and sexually-based attacks. Whilst rape has been shown by sociologists and anthropologists to be pervasive and present in every culture in the world (Yamada, 2008, p. 1), the word is loaded, and rests on contemporary cultural concepts and categories that are not coterminous with those of Ancient Israel. Category differences however do not mean the concept is not useful, especially when asking how 21st century readers can approach and understand Judges 19-21.

Study of rape was shaped by Brownmiller's classic volume, *Against Our Will* (1975). Some form of her definition of rape is used by most scholars considering rape and sexual transgression (Feinstein, 2014; Lipka, 2006; Scholz, 2000, 2005, 2010; Yamada, 2008): 'rape occurs if a woman chooses not to have intercourse with a man and the man chooses to proceed against her will' (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 18). Biblical texts however work with different understandings of what constitute sexual transgression; as a result, whilst rape

may occur, the narratives as told may not give us the clues, descriptions and ingredients we need to fully apply the definition (Feinstein, 2014, p. 69). So, for instance, perspectives on sexual transgression that are primarily concerned with the integrity of and incursions against the household may bypass issues of consent focused on the victim. Other flaws in the definition include the narrowness of focusing on man-woman rape, as well as the variability in perception of 'choice'; assessing what choice is available and what choice is made by different agents is notoriously difficult and needs to take into account relational identity, societal expectations and psychological make-up and history. While I have chosen to use the term rape, in particular to translate ענה, this comes with the cautions set out in chapter 3, note 36.

Brownmiller's work underlines the widely-agreed concept that rape is about power, rather than sexual desire (Bal, 1988a; Bach, 1998). This power is located within the event, but reaches out more widely through the representation of rape. The overused feminist slogan 'rape is a weapon by all men to control all women' may overstate the case, but draws attention to how representations of rape are closely linked to norms and expectations regarding femininity and masculinity, which in turn leads to judgements on who is considered to be a victim, and advice for women to control their appearance and actions so as not to cause rape (Brownmiller, 1975). Bach (1998) argues that history has tended to disregard stories of strong women who defend themselves, but mythify 'the beautiful frail woman who dies while protecting her innocence' (p. 1). The nexus of concepts around innocence and victimhood is particularly important, as representations of women determine how they are perceived with respect to an alleged assault. With the story of the פילגש, the history of interpretation has consistently sought either to say she is raped and murdered in punishment for her unfaithfulness, or tried to amend the text to argued she never was unfaithful in the first place, and therefore was an 'innocent victim' (4.1.3). Somehow, a woman's sexual past and behaviour is seen as inextricably linked with the root causes of rape, whereas all current psychological studies locate the root causes of rape in individual and social factors linked to attitudes towards gender and power (Scholz, 2010).

5.3.2.2. Rape, law and culture in Scripture

Laws and narratives of rape in Scripture sit within the wider framework of sexuality as primarily a male experience (Aschkenasy, 1986, p. 124). Laws to do with what we would today consider to be rape focus primarily on men's rights and the proper re-ordering of

households after a breach has occurred, as in Deut. 22.23-30. Whilst Deut. 22 reads as a rape text in terms our definition, it is not focused as such. The focus is the breach of household rules and of men's rights of ownership over women's bodies; hence it does not focus on the emotional impact on the woman, but on the response to the man's transgression and the (im)possibility of social restoration (Aschkenasy, 1986, p. 122). Consent is mentioned in Deut. 22, not to affirm the woman's rights, but to establish the nature of the violation of the man she belongs to (Gravett, 2004, p. 280). The 'relational male primarily responsible' (Brenner, 1997, p. 136) for the woman is legally considered the primary victim, whose rights are being redressed through punitive or restorative action. The males are therefore the subjects within the crime, as perpetrators or victims, whilst violated women are the object of the crime (Kawashima, 2011, p. 2).

Legal texts alone however open only a small window onto attitudes to sexual violence. Even in societies where the victim's rights are more prominent in law, Irigaray (1994a, p. 32) argues that using crime as the main category for understanding rape is misguided, because law, by nature, is about social order and maintaining right relationships within the community and not primarily concerned with rape's impact on subjectivity and personhood. Hence, whilst the legal framework is important, particularly in highlighting the public nature of the crime, and linking it to a common horizon of violence against women, it is only one component of understanding rape culturally. Reducing the concept to what is found in Biblical legal texts and legal language misses out the complexity of rape narratives. While there isn't a single Hebrew word to translate rape (Gravett, 2004), we find a nexus of terms that appear in the main narratives of rape (Dinah, Tamar and the פילגש): the verbs ענה and עלל that denote humiliation and defilement; other terms to do with force; נבלה as a description of the event. The conjunction of these words marks out these narratives as concerned with forcible sexual activity, even though this is not in itself a crime punishable in law. The narrative of 19-21 takes this further, and through the parallel between 19 and 21, suggests that what is clearly a case of both sexual transgression (legally violating the Levite's rights) and of rape (as forcible sexual intercourse with consequences for the female victim) can give us categories of thought for assessing the forced marriage of other women in the text, even when their fate is (dubiously) 'legal'.

Speaking of legal frameworks with regards to rape is speaking of responses to rape, rather than rape as a phenomenon and a real event located in specific relational cultures. Yet

responses go far beyond the legal, as rape sends shockwaves through all those whose lives and identity are connected with the men and women involved, powerfully shown in the spiralling events of 19-21. The responses portrayed in 19-21 are solely male; female victims are voiceless, and no other women are allowed a voice or response either, which heightens the sense of isolation of the victim, and the overall sense that all sexual matters and their representation are under the control of men. The Levite's response is cold and unemotional at first, and then descends into disproportional violence towards the body of the פילגש. Exum (1995, p. 85) locates his violent response not in the rape, but in the initial unfaithfulness; the dismembering then becomes an attempt to erase her and the memory of a crime that was first directed against him. His speech then equally distorts the events, and the community's response is shady; the use of נבלה suggests they are indeed responding to a sexual transgression. Whether this transgression focuses on the woman's ordeal or the violation of the Levite's rights and household remains unclear. One other may be expected to respond however: God, as the originator of Torah and the rescuer of Lot's daughters; one may expect divine direction at this point. Yet Yahweh is either silent, or withdrawing from participation. This could be seen as refusing to endorse masculinist responses: in a world dominated by violence and totalitarian aspirations, would a response of power by God be anything but replicating and thereby identifying with, the male phallocentric principle? To some degree, God is caught in the web of the logic and grammar of totalitarian male discourse, so that the only response possible is a negative one: either enter the male discourse or withdraw and be silent, thereby identifying with the other silent members of the story. Of course, withdrawing when one has the power to change the course of events is problematic, yet a position of identification with victims may be less problematic than using the language and weapons of the oppressor. This withdrawal of divine presence then needs to be read canonically so that the apparent powerlessness and silence of Yahweh may be seen not as final, but part of a pattern of relating to power differently in order to subvert it.

5.3.2.4. The dynamics of rape

Rape studies over the last thirty years have concentrated on the links between violence, gender concepts and the construction of male identity (Allwood, 1998; Scholz, 2010). My analysis of the construction of identity in Judges 19-21 has addressed precisely some of these questions. The text reveals concepts of masculinity intimately linked with issues of power through an 'I' and 'not-I' approach to constructing the self, where individuals are judged against the ideal self, often projected onto the divinity. Recent studies illuminate

not just male-female rape, but also the type of dynamics at play in the threatened rape of the Levite. Studies of male rape victims' experience and of male perpetrators of homosexual rape both point to the intent of 'feminisation' present (Allwood, 1998, p. 121) as the most difficult aspect of the rape for male victims to deal with. Rape is linked to wider gender dynamics regardless of the sex of its primary object. The studies are consonant with an analysis of chapter 19-20 that highlights the crisis of identity occasioned for the Levite, and defuse interpretations focusing on sexual orientation. This is not about sex, but about power, particularly of men over women, and how rape is a quintessential attack on the Other as Other, either directly, in the rape of a woman, or indirectly by turning a man into the Other that is woman (Carden, 1999; de Lesseps, 1980). De Lesseps takes the argument further and contends that this othering is primarily motivated by fear and a desire for dominance because the Other is seen as the Same, yet acknowledging similarity is too threatening; hence, in Irigarayan terms, they are turned into the Other-of-the-Same; neither human together, nor truly other, but an inverted and distorted image of the subject seeking dominance. This Other is both feared and desired, yet neither fear nor desire leads to encounter (Irigaray, 1974, p. 19ff); rather, it leads to the objectification of the Other as an object of fear and desire. The object can never be allowed subjectivity again for fear of disturbing a carefully elaborated sense of identity, hence true encounter marked by mutual desire and respect is impossible. This is often translated in the representation of men as active, subjects within the sexual encounter, and women as passive objects. It is about consuming or possessing the Other, absorbing them into one consciousness (Irigaray, 1997, p. 38ff). In rape, this logic is pushed to the extreme as the body of the Other is divorced from subjectivity as far as is possible without the Other being killed, often the next logical stage (de Lesseps, 1980, p. 98).

In Judges 19, the woman's challenge of her own status as object, 'taken' by the Levite, through her unfaithfulness and departure, destabilises the Levite's concept of gender relations; the rest of the chapter recounts his increasing treatment of her as Other until he (thinks he) has obliterated her from consciousness through murder, dismemberment and false witness. The rape of the women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh rests on the same overall principle of the othering and objectification of women, an overall principle underlying rape in both war and peace (Scholz, 2010, p. 137).

The same dynamic explains the Levite's inability to witness to his own potential rape; doing so would expose the possibility of identification with his פילגש, the possibility of a

shared human identity that would remove her from her place as object, Other and mirror. Furthermore, admitting that men from Benjamin had considered othering him in this fashion would have opened up an unpassable chasm; it would have been saying that the Benjaminites thought of themselves as superior, as men, but were willing to other the men of Israel. As Bach (1998) puts it, the rape of the פילגש merely 'stretched the boundaries' (p. 12). The rape of the Levite would have smashed them completely, and made the readmission of Benjamin into Israel unthinkable. A raped man has no place within the society that Israel can imagine. A raped woman can be married, however distasteful the thought. As we see in Judges 21, the forcible marriage of women, even against their kin's wishes, eventually forges links between men, and yields reconfigured households; a male raped by males has no place within this system of exchange, but rather undermines the very principles – societal concepts of the household – that undergird it. Berquist (2002) encapsulates it well:

> Because men who are heads of households control their own sexuality, forcing them through rape destroys the household. However, women do not control their own sexuality; transferring the control of their sexuality makes a connection between households that has enduring social consequences of allegiance and alliance. (p. 93)

This is not to say that heterosexual rape is condoned in the text and its world, but rather that it is 'thinkable' where homosexual rape is 'unthinkable', a true taboo reflected in the narrative flow of chapters 19-21, and an illustration of Irigaray's argument that a phallocentric system is damaging to all, not just women. The strength of chapters 19-21 as a sacred text therefore is not just that it acknowledges rape and its social consequences, questions the narrative of abuse, and does so in a text that cannot be ignored precisely because it is sacred, but it also acknowledges the socially taboo possibility of male rape, in witness to voiceless male victims, who are so voiceless and invisible they only appear as a suppressed possibility in the text.

5.3.2.5. The silent rape of the women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh

The epilogue to Judges stands in clear contrast to its beginning; both feature an 'arranged marriage' linked to war. Yet in chapter 1, Achsah has rights, status and power. She has a voice, a name, and so have the men around her. She is married to a victor in war. The women of chapter 21 have no rights, status, power, voice, or name. Neither do their prospective husbands, who are not the victors, but the defeated Benjaminites. Nevertheless, commentators have often seen chapter 21 as a 'solution' to the Benjaminite problem, even if an 'imperfect solution to a complex problem' (Jones-Warsaw, 1993, p.

183). Those who see it as a solution cite cultural norms for making peace and the normality of rape in war as a political rather than a personal violation (Bach, 1998, p. 10). As always, this ignores the text and its structure. The exchange of women here is not practiced to *achieve* peace, since the war has been won and no negotiations are needed. The Benjaminites are utterly defeated and hiding in a cave. The Israelites take the initiative; it is more akin to marriages in peace time to seal political alliances. The military tone of the chapter belies its overall context. The women of Jabesh-Gilead are not captives of war who happen to have been taken. Rather, they were the very object of military action in the first place; one can hardly call it a war, given it is not presented as a dispute, but unilateral punitive action. Nor does either episode conform to the pattern of bargaining between households, clans or political entities: the women are taken, not negotiated over.

The context evokes the people's use of the 'captive bride law' of Deuteronomy 21.10-14 to be highly questionable in the first place. The law itself acknowledges the specific status of war brides, including the deeply humiliating effect of being forced into sex with a member of the opposing army, shown by the use of ענה (Fenstein, 2014, p. 70). The law ensures some protection for such women, with no male relatives to negotiate on their behalf (Washington, 1997, p. 348). Provision is made to enable the woman to mourn her dead relatives (who could include her former husband and children). Virginity is not a concern here, and the stress is put on a woman's beauty and the desire it provokes. In Jabesh-Gilead, no mention is made of a mourning period, and virginity is key. The differences with Deuteronomy highlight the even more vulnerable status of the women of Jabesh-Gilead, and raise the question, why couldn't a different solution be found? If the men of Jabesh-Gilead had not come to Mizpah, they would not have taken the oath not to give their daughters in marriage, and a deal could have been brokered? The logic of war and domination prevails, so that war tactics are used, rather than the negotiations of peace time.

Abduction in war is then followed by abduction in peace: the text does not simply illustrate rape as a weapon of war, but as a much more far-reaching problem. The use of military vocabulary however unites the two incidents, and links them to the war with Benjamin, and, retrospectively, to the rape of the פילגש, and ideas of force and coercion. The violence and unacceptability of the episode are heightened by the use of חטף in 21.21 and the picture of families coming to protest in 21.22. Hepner (2010, p. 833) argues there

are parallel provisions for abducting wives in ANE law that override any prior betrothal. If Hepner is right, then this is another case of Israel behaving just like surrounding nations. Critics have often tried to argue that the festival is a fertility rite, the women's dancing is suggestive and it is all part of a marriage ritual (Bal, 1988a; Butler, 2009; Gray, 1967; Hepner, 2010; Ryan, 2007). This interpretation directly contradicts the text's description of a festival to Yahweh, ignores everything that has preceded it and the ironic military retelling redolent with parallels to the war on Benjamin. Whilst the brides of Jabesh-Gilead may at least fall under the provisions for war brides, which give some modicum of protection, there are no laws, documents or bride price protecting the women of Shiloh (Oeste, 2010, p. 311).

Meanwhile, the men of Benjamin would have lost wives, children, mothers, fathers, siblings… They are then married off to someone from the group that had killed their loved ones, in a marriage with two sets of grieving partners, whose tribes of origin had been responsible for their devastation. The men and women concerned are then both expected to engage in (unwanted) sexual relations. Men too are touched by sexual coercion. Whilst much criticism has focused on the erasure of the women from chapter 21, one cannot assume that the fate of the Benjaminites is by default a happy one. Assuming that the Benjaminites are having a happy ending simply reverses the polarity of phallocentrism without challenging its central assumptions or offering the possibility of subjectivity to both genders. The logic of the phallocentric discourse and its overriding priority to preserve the Name of the Father leaves casualties amongst both genders.

5.3.2.6. The representation of rape and violence

Interpreting a text of terror such as Judges 19-21 unsurprisingly reveals widely divergent views of what is represented through the text and how, from Hepner's 'virtual but benign form of rape' (2010, p. 821) to the Reformer's assessment of the gang rape as just deserts (4.1.3.1) to Exum's double rape of the פילגש, by the men in the text and the pen of the one that wrote the story (1993). Different assessments ascribe different meanings and value to the word 'rape', with different (mis)understandings of its impact and root causes. Whilst traditional interpretations may have minimised or even occluded rape altogether, the risk of contemporary feminist interpretations has been to replicate the movement of the text towards the Benjaminites and characterise the rapists as the Other who loses humanity, whose subjectivity is completely suppressed, and are no longer part of a common construction of identity, except as negative images. There is a risk of reversing the polarity of oppression and othering the men of Gibeah, the Benjaminites, and the men

of Israel who mastermind the rape of the women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh for the purposes of retrieving a female consciousness built in opposition to theirs.

Exum's argument 'rape by the pen' (1993, p. 180) relies on an oppositional reading that assumes a causal link between adultery and gang rape, murder and dismemberment. She does not distinguish between the events in the text and the narrator's telling of them; rather, the narrator is conflated with the men of the text for simply telling the story; so Exum argues that the narrator should never have used the story of the פילגש to illustrate the deterioration of Israel, but used another story, like the rape of the Levite himself, as leaving him to go free implicitly suggests the woman is punished whilst innocent others (the Levite, the old man's daughter) go free. I have already argued that the dynamics of the text do not permit such an interpretation of the narrative strategies and that, far from condoning the rape of any of the women, the narrator actually opens up spaces for endless questioning of Israel's actions and morals. In addition, what effect would it have for a sacred text not to represent the reality of violence against women? Within the overall logic of the book, the woman's fate does not simply embody the deterioration of Israel, but how this deterioration disproportionately affects the most vulnerable, women in particular, but also, with חרם, non-combatants and children. This would be missed with a focus on a male victim.

The problem lies in the *reading* of texts of violence, readings that collapse the moral world of the readers with that of the text and fail to read its subtler dynamics. A text of terror and abuse read within a phallocentric society can easily be interpreted as promoting that society's behavioural norms, especially when the textual challenge to the events portrayed comes through irony and an invitation to reflection, rather than by replicating the totalitarian discourse of the dominant group and legislating from above. More recent studies of rape in the Biblical corpus (Fenstein, 2014; Yamada, 2008) have argued for a more nuanced approach to the main rape texts. The connection between law and narrative is particularly salient in Yamada's work, where she argues that in Genesis 34 (Dinah), Judges 19 and 2 Samuel 13 (Tamar), there is a consistent pattern of a movement from rape to male responses that are excessively violent to some form of social fragmentation. The disproportion of the response in each case is in stark contrast to the less violent alternatives suggested in Deuteronomy 22, which shows that all three texts represent a movement beyond accepted social norms. In each of these texts therefore, it is crucial to note that it is rape that is the disruptive social force, and not women's

sexuality (Yamada, 2008, p. 2). In Judges 19, rape is the graphic sign that exposes the depth of brokenness of the Israelite community (Keefe, 1993, pp. 86-95). The use of women's bodies in representation can then be a sign, not of their erasure and appropriation, but of their relevance to the symbolic order of a community in danger of losing its way.

5.3.3. Violence and sacrifice

A final category for thinking of violence is prominent in the text: sacrifice. Sacrifice here works at the level of scapegoating, displacing the consequences of sin onto a specific victim or group, and of substitution, of one victim for another. The theme of the sacrifice of women for the needs of men is prominent in Irigaray[100] (1985, 1987a) as a feature of phallocentric societies. If identity is predicated on a model of the One and the not-One, the identity of the Other and the very fact of difference are sacrificed to the needs of the One. In Judges 19, this is embodied in the substitution of a female victim to save a male, in the use of women to buy peace, in the sacrifice of women's subjectivity to constitute the male subject, individually (Levite) and corporately (Israel), and, most saliently, in the dismemberment of the פילגש as she becomes a scapegoat for what cannot be said or acknowledged: the possibility of male rape and the othering of the phallocentric subject.

The dismemberment sits within a wider framework of reference to human mutilation and sacrifice in Judges: Adoni-Bezek, Jephthah's daughter, Samson (the Philistines give a sacrifice after mutilating his body), Abimelech murdering his brothers on a stone (Sutskover, 2014). One could then add the people of Benjamin and Jabesh-Gilead, burnt in חרם to 'purge the nation of evil'. These passages are unified by the use of sacrificial language. Here in Judges 19, the narrator uses a word for cutting (נתח) only used in the preparation of animal sacrifices as an עולה (Ex. 29.17-18; Lev. 1.6, 12; 8.20; 1 Kgs 18.33), with one notable exception, Saul's battle muster (Monroe, 2013). The parallels with Genesis 22 and 1 Samuel 11 strengthen the sacrificial overtones, whilst undermining the validity of the Levite's actions (4.3.3.3). The intentional use of sacrificial language begs the question, what is she sacrificed for, and to whom?

[100] I do not have space in this study for an extensive analysis of Irigaray's approach to the notion of sacrifice; it largely rests on Girardian principles, but argues, *contra* Girard and Lacan, that sacrifice is not necessary, either socially or psychologically. For further details see Caldwell, 2002; Irigaray, 1985, 1987a; Keenan, 2004.

Exum (1995, p. 84) answers that it is women's sexuality that is sacrificed and destroyed; Bal (1988a, p. 126), the humanity of the פילגש. Their arguments are typical of a certain stream of criticism, yet do not explain the sacrificial symbolism or its function within the narrative that follows as well as precedes. Their explanation is closer to a 'devoting to the ban', a חרם decree, than a sacrifice: what offends and risks the purity of the nation must be destroyed. The point however is that the body is *not* destroyed, but used to symbolise the need for action by focusing the attention of the people through transferring meaning from a wider social concern to a ritualistic action, a typical feature of sacrifice. The official meaning of the sacrifice, in its narrative logic, is to embody the 'evil thing' that has been done to Israel, to name and display the reality of evil within the community. This is where the parallel stops however, because guilt and consequences are not displaced onto the body itself. At a deeper level, the פילגש is sacrificed (murdered?) by the Levite as a scapegoat, as a representation of what cannot be said and acknowledged: the reality of the events in Gibeah, and the threat to the Levite's identity that they represent. Whilst an element of anger against women's sexuality – expressed through voluntary unfaithfulness and through coercive abuse – may be present, it is not represented as the main motivator. Indeed, the Levite's initial response to the woman's action was to go after her to persuade her to come back. It is Gibeah that triggers the dismemberment. The symbolism of the body is inescapably ambiguous and resists pinning down, because it is intimately linked to other ambiguities in the text: the Levite's character, his motivation, the real reasons for the war, her actual time of death. The meaning of the sacrificial symbolism is different whether the mob or the Levite are (directly) responsible for her death. If the men killed her, she has functioned as a substitution for the Levite in sexual terms, but also in terms of her very life, giving substance to his allegation that they meant to kill *him*. If the Levite has killed her, she has functioned as a sexual substitute but is also a scapegoat for the feelings and meanings he cannot acknowledge in public around the destruction of his identity as a man and an Israelite.

As conclusion to Judges, the broken body of the פילגש vividly represents the brokenness of Israel as a nation, and illustrates the futility of sacrifices. Israel may offer its daughters as substitutes and scapegoats, but this will not buy safety or identity for the nation, merely devastation and ruin.

5.3.4. Remembering violence: Judges 19-21 as a text of trauma

The dismembered body speaks in another powerful way, as a visual symbol of trauma. Trauma shatters the self and the ability to speak, it is what is left unsaid, unwitnessed to, because the victim cannot express it (Rothschild, 2000; van der Kolk, 2015). It is the most unspeakable part of an experience that produces what psychologists term traumatic memories.[101] The body of the פילגש here represents what cannot be said: the horror of the night she has been through, the horror of what could have happened to the Levite, the horror at the very centre of the life of Israel that eventually leads to mass murder and rape. Her body is never brought back together. There is no possibility for her to be restored into one consciousness, a whole and healed speaking subject, just as Israel remains utterly fragmented, in endless pieces each carrying the trauma of the story. The fragmentation of woman and nation speaks to the reality of trauma and its enduring significance. The very fact of narrating the story is a refusal to yield to the loss of memory that trauma calls for (Irigaray, 1984, pp. 173-199). Trauma naturally calls for a distancing from a story, for attempts to forget, just as the Levite omits from his speech the most traumatic (for him) aspect of the night in Gibeah. Such loss of memory then poses a threat to the continuity of individual and group existence by interrupting the possibility of continuous relational weaving. Memory loss of past trauma means that the threads of relational identity are lost and unacknowledged and yield distorted narratives of present identity. Irigaray (*ibid*.) argues that the only way forward is through memory and witness, memory that acknowledges the body and violence to the body as real, and inscriptions of wars of identity. The text of 19-21 therefore functions at several levels as a text of trauma; first, by graphically depicting the psychological reality of trauma; second, by emphasising the bodiliness of trauma and its aftermath; and third, by refusing to be silent about the reality of trauma. This third level ensures witness to the reality of abuse, violence and death of the women of the text, and their centrality in the construction of collective Israelite identity. As such, Judges 19-21 fulfils its function as a 'bridge of the present that remembers' (1.3.2.1), ensuring the past and its link to the present are acknowledged, thereby forming an invitation to a different future.

[101] Irigaray does not deal with trauma in a focused way, though her training as a psychoanalyst means that the category of trauma informs much of her reflections on what is suppressed and the violence underlying identity formation (1974; 1977; 1979; 1982; 1984).

Conclusion.
Where now? Reading Judges 19-21 today.

We have now come full circle back to my initial question, how do we read Judges 19-21 as a sacred text with relevance today?

This study has analysed key aspects of the text, concentrating on the need to read carefully, with an eye to the distinction between the perspective of characters within the text and that of the narrator. A careful literary analysis has revealed a skilful, subtle and sensitive narration that questions the narrative world and its presuppositions and invites readers to reflect and respond. Setting the text within context and canon – and identifying narrative strategies – means that simplistic accusations of patriarchy and reinforcement of abusive attitudes cannot stand. Instead, the text carefully questions both the story and its readers. Using Irigaray's philosophy as a lens for analysis has uncovered complex dynamics of identity formation for individuals and nation, dynamics that help explain some of the more disturbing features of the text. The tendency to construct identity out of the material of an Other who cannot be allowed to participate in identity formation or to develop their own identity leads to the victimisation of this Other at times of personal and national threat. Within the grim landscape of an androcentric world, the narrator portrays the links between negative, totalitarian identities and violence and victimisation with incisive accuracy. Paying attention to these dynamics forms an essential part of a reading strategy that seeks to uncover repressed subjectivities, uncover the gaps and faultlines of totalitarian discourse, and listen to what emerges beyond the accepted grammar of discourse: the possibility of otherness that exceeds acceptable representation. Paying attention to the specific dynamics of the text is essential if we want to avoid collusive readings that reinforce the oppression depicted in the text by theologising and justifying it.

This Irigarayan reading therefore highlights the importance of Judges 19-21 as sacred text, both as an essential conclusion to the book of Judges that gathers together the threads of the narrative of the nation's descent into unbridled individualism and chaos, and as a text that remembers and invites us to respond to key issues of human relationships.

The importance of remembering trauma and witnessing to its enduring impact raises the question, what does it do to communities of faith to avoid reading Judges 19-21, as they often do? What is the effect of dismissing stories of violence (primarily) against women, because the context of the telling is one of an androcentric culture?

The presence of these texts not only attests to the fact of gender violence and oppression over history, but also lifts a mirror for us to use now: a mirror for a society that may portray itself as more advanced in terms of gender relations, yet whose so-called liberative readings have often othered and rendered invisible some of the men of the text; a mirror that begs us to consider the configuration of gender violence today, lest we forget that it still happens; a mirror that reflects some of the ways in which violence against specific groups is constructed and justified through processes of collective construction of identity. Judges 19-21 offers us the possibility of reflecting on our own society's flaws by holding up a mirror that says, look and see what happens when everyone does 'what is right in their own eyes'. Judges 19-21 offers another type of mirror to victims of violence isolated by the experience of trauma, the shame associated with abuse, and the unspeakability of the experience. This mirror refuses to shroud the experience of gender violence in silence, to leave it unspoken, but graphically depicts the brutality of powerlessness and silencing, and thereby breaks the silence to inscribe stories of trauma within a larger story of hope. There, the namelessness of the characters in the text is central to its ability to reach far beyond itself, for both victims and those who think they never would be participants in oppression. The unnamed פילגש can function much as the 'unknown soldier', as a focus for the anonymous, forgotten, brutalised victims of gender violence over history, whose stories may not exactly match hers yet find a place of acknowledgement and witness for their experience that connects them beyond the individual to a transcendent horizon of solidarity with others. The nameless crowds-turned-mob also demand that we recognise the potential, attested throughout history, for most human beings to commit atrocities (Michelson, 2012, p. 93), and consider communal responsibility for individual action. In Judges 19-21, it is the community as a whole that participates into the fate of the פילגש, and all the disparate victims of chapters 20 and 21: through the ways in which they construct identity, actively oppress, or stay silent and stand by in the face of abuse. The community is alert to some offences and blind to others. Every person in the narrative does 'what is right in their own eyes'; the shape of individualism is modified by social positioning, yet all bear responsibility for it to some degree.

The story of Judges 19-21 as a story of the silence and silencing of God is equally crucial: it is a story of meaningless suffering, not ordained by God, not serving higher purposes (von Kellenbach, 2000, p. 178). It is tempting to say that a sacred text should have done better than present a silent God failing to act. Yet the experience of meaningless suffering is a human constant, and one that can only be redeemed by a horizon of hope that does not negate the meaninglessness; setting the story within the wider canon can help do this; setting the story within a sacred text also makes the experience of divine silence and abandonment a theologically acknowledged experience. It is not a taboo, but an acknowledged reality that moves the sacred text beyond the fairy tale and into the realm of complex reality. As such the story's witness is essential to set against stories of divine intervention. The intertextual references with Genesis are poignant, and set a deeper theological question at work. The telling of a similar story with a different divine response moves God out of a mechanistic and predictable relationship and into the realm of true subjectivity: God cannot be manipulated or directed; instead, the theological message of Judges is that of an interactive, interdependent human-divine relationship, within which neither partner is fully known or mastered by the Other. It also argues that there are no easy fixes to the abuses and horrors of human history, because the problem is located in every human being, their choices and actions and the way in which these then combine in forming collective patterns of identity and behaviour. Judges 19-21 is a text that fosters questions rather than gives answers. As such, it is a profoundly theological text that invites readers to explore faith in relationship with those who have come before and the God who stands both within and beyond the text.

The act of meeting the text as both sacred and Other means entering a third space where we can allow the otherness of the story to tear our own temporal weaving. It is much easier to proceed in reverse and tear the text's world of meaning by critiquing its male-centeredness and lack of emotional representation. Yet the productive space of encounter, according to Irigaray, is a space between, where our questions probe the text and its world, and we let the text probe ours. It is within this space that the text still asks us, with respect to both its own story and that of our world, to 'Dwell upon her! Give counsel! Speak out!'

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